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JEWELRY ▪ DESIGN ▪ METAL ARTS

SUMMER 2003

volume 23 number 3
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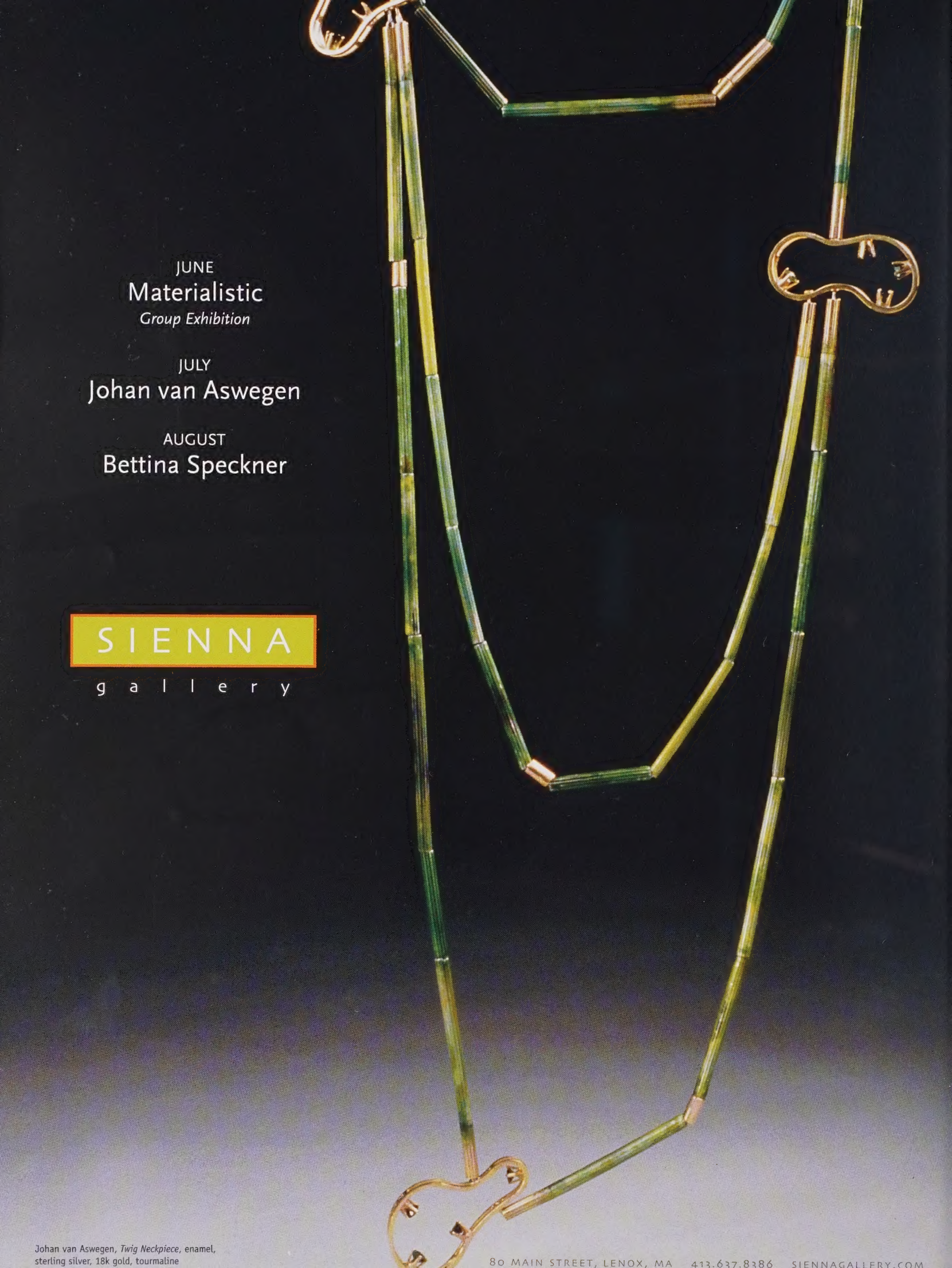
Heart and Head

Art of Gold

Metaphors in Metal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Johan van Aswegen, Twig Neckpiece, enamel, sterling silver, 18k gold, tourmaline
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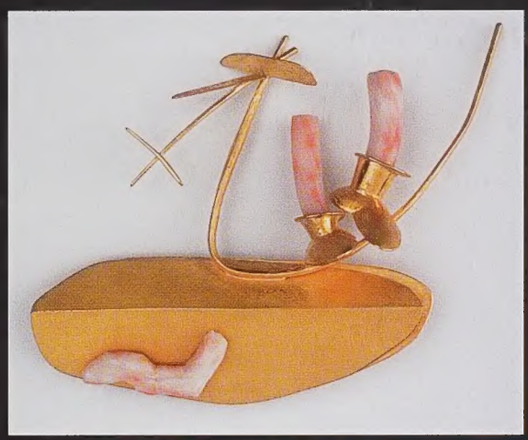
Manfred Bischoff



Skipping Girl. 1999, Brooch
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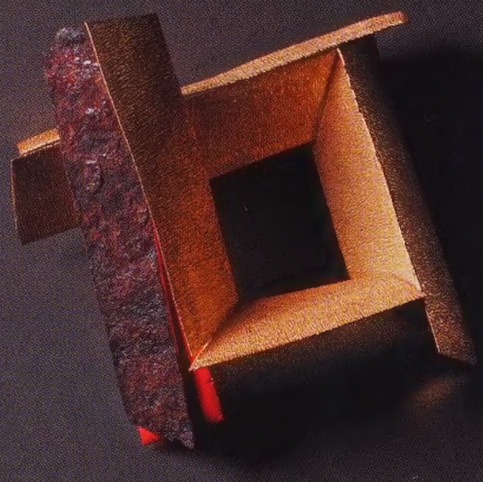

Annamaria Zanella, brooch "roof", gold, pigment, iron

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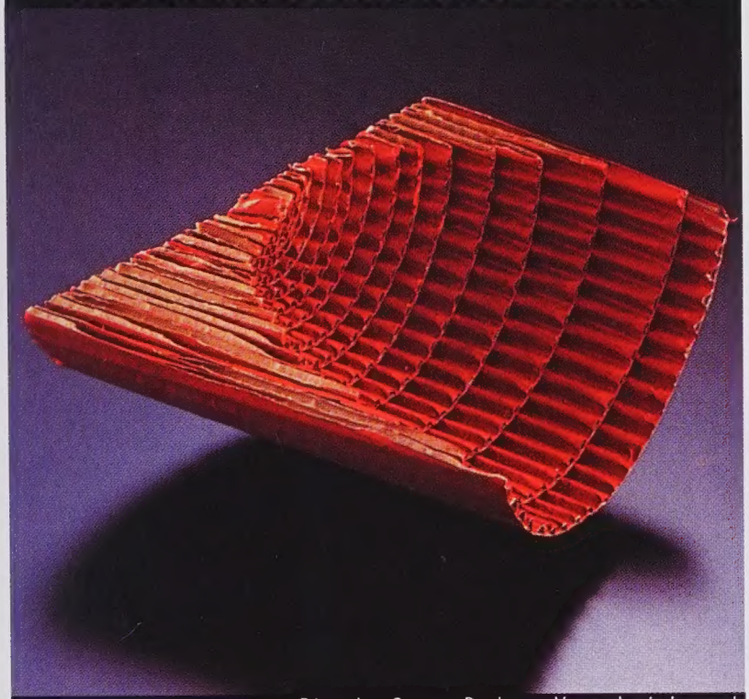

Ritsuko Ogura, Red cardboard pinbrooch

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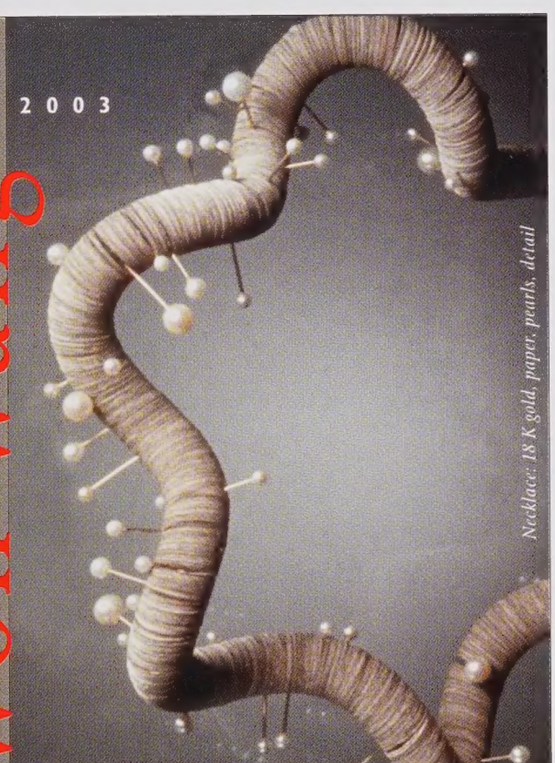

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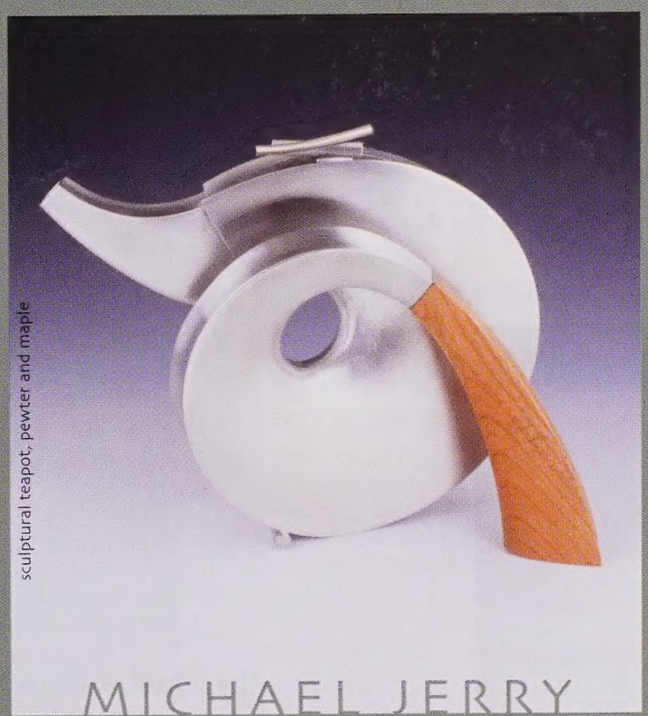
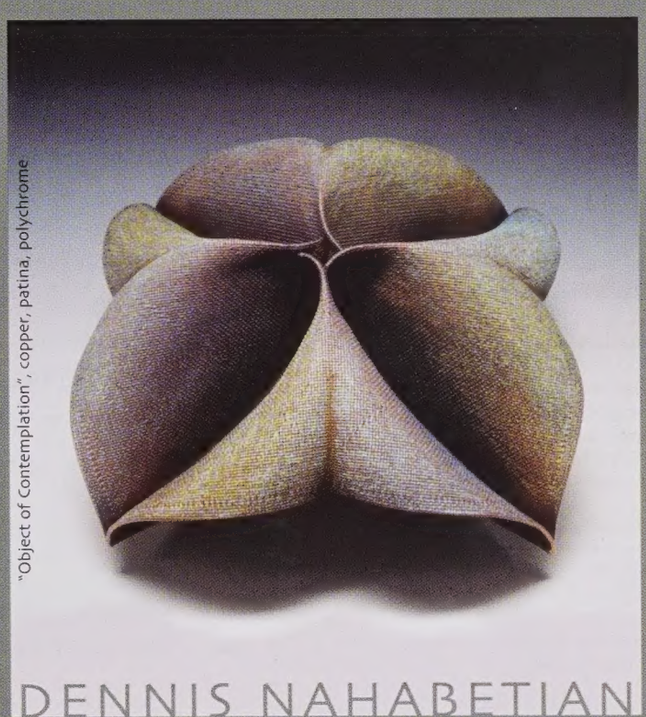


sculptural teapot, pewter and maple

MICHAEL JERRY



"Object of Contemplation", copper, patina, polychrome

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SUMMER 2003
METALSMITH VOL 23 NO 3

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Photo: Lynn Thompson

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FROM THE EDITOR

SUZANNE RAMLJAK

Jewelry and gold have been inseparable for centuries, but in recent decades this bond has been ruptured. Studio jewelers have staged a veritable revolt against this precious metal, opting to enlist everything from bubblegum to barbed wire in their work. Now that the revolution has succeeded, and art jewelry has severed its close identification with gold, many metalsmiths have eased their militancy and begun to revisit traditional materials and forms.

Indeed, gold is making a comeback among art jewelers. As Marjorie Simon states in her essay on "The Art of Gold" exhibition, this century may even witness a new "gold rush" in American jewelry. The exhibition reveals the material's adaptability for diverse stylistic and conceptual ends. Despite the wealth of craftsmanship displayed, Simon detects certain limits in recent American goldsmithing and a shortage of the wit and playfulness found in European jewelers' handling of gold.

The jewelry of German-born Manfred Bischoff, featured in this issue, epitomizes such irreverence and humor. Bischoff frequently uses gold in a manner that subverts the material's grandiose associations. Gold becomes the lure to rivet our attention on his often burlesque imagery. For Bischoff, working in gold and other precious materials forces the viewer to take his work seriously, regardless of questionable content. As he asserts, "One must give the highest values to the lowest thinking." Accordingly, he has crafted golden pigs and potatoes, bunnies and breasts, to stage his philosophical escapades.

The work of the late Don Tompkins, profiled here, also reveals a hearty irreverence. Tompkins was an early pioneer in the use of unorthodox metalsmithing materials and methods, paving the way for the explorations of the 1970s and 1980s. As author Ben Mitchell recounts, Tompkins brought "eccentric materials and new techniques, social and political satire, the detritus of popular culture, private histories, bawdy good humor, and just plain good fun to the workbench. "Tompkins's work demonstrates that in the right hands, and with ample inspiration, any material can be made as good as gold....

SR

METALSMITH

a publication of SNAG,
the organization for jewelers,
designers and metalsmiths

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Metalsmith (ISSN 0270-1146) is published in January, March, May, August, and October by SNAG, a not-for-profit organization, 4513 Lincoln Ave. #213, Lisle, IL 60532-1290.
www.snagmetalsmith.org

Annual Subscription
to *Metalsmith* (5 issues): $29 North America, $41 foreign.
SNAG one-year membership rates include a subscription to *Metalsmith*: $69 North America, $85 foreign.
Students: $45 North America, $58 foreign.
Multiyear subscriptions and memberships are also available at a discount.

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SNAG/Metalsmith Business Office
4513 Lincoln Avenue, Suite 213
Lisle, Illinois 60532-1290
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Claims for missing issues are accepted only if received within three months.

Executive Director
Dana Singer
2275 Amigo Drive
Missoula, Montana 59808
(406) 728 -5248 FAX (406) 728-2729
DSinger@SNAGmetalsmith.org

Advertising
Jean Azzato
16 Dunbar Court
Bedminster, New Jersey 07921
(908) 901-9767 FAX (908) 901-0770
metalsmithads@aol.com

Editorial
Suzanne Ramljak
22 Rockwell Road
Bethel, Connecticut 06801
(203) 792-5599 FAX (203) 792-5588
metalsmitheditor@aol.com

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Metalsmith is indexed in *Art Index*.
The full text of *Metalsmith* is available in the electronic versions of *Art Index*. On-line (computer) indexing is available through Wilsonline, 950 University Avenue, Bronx, NY 10452

National Newsstand Distribution
Eastern News Distributors
250 West 55th Street, New York, NY 10019

Contents
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Third-class postage permit at Duluth, Minnesota, and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster
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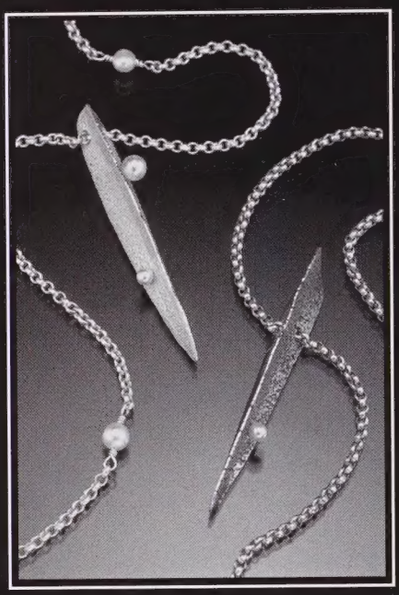

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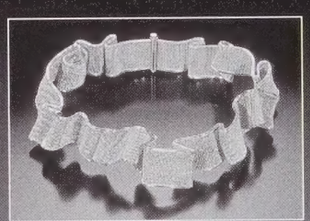
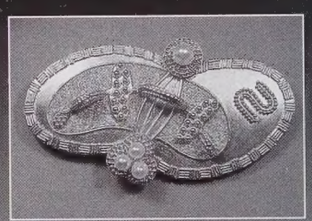


Mary Lee Hu



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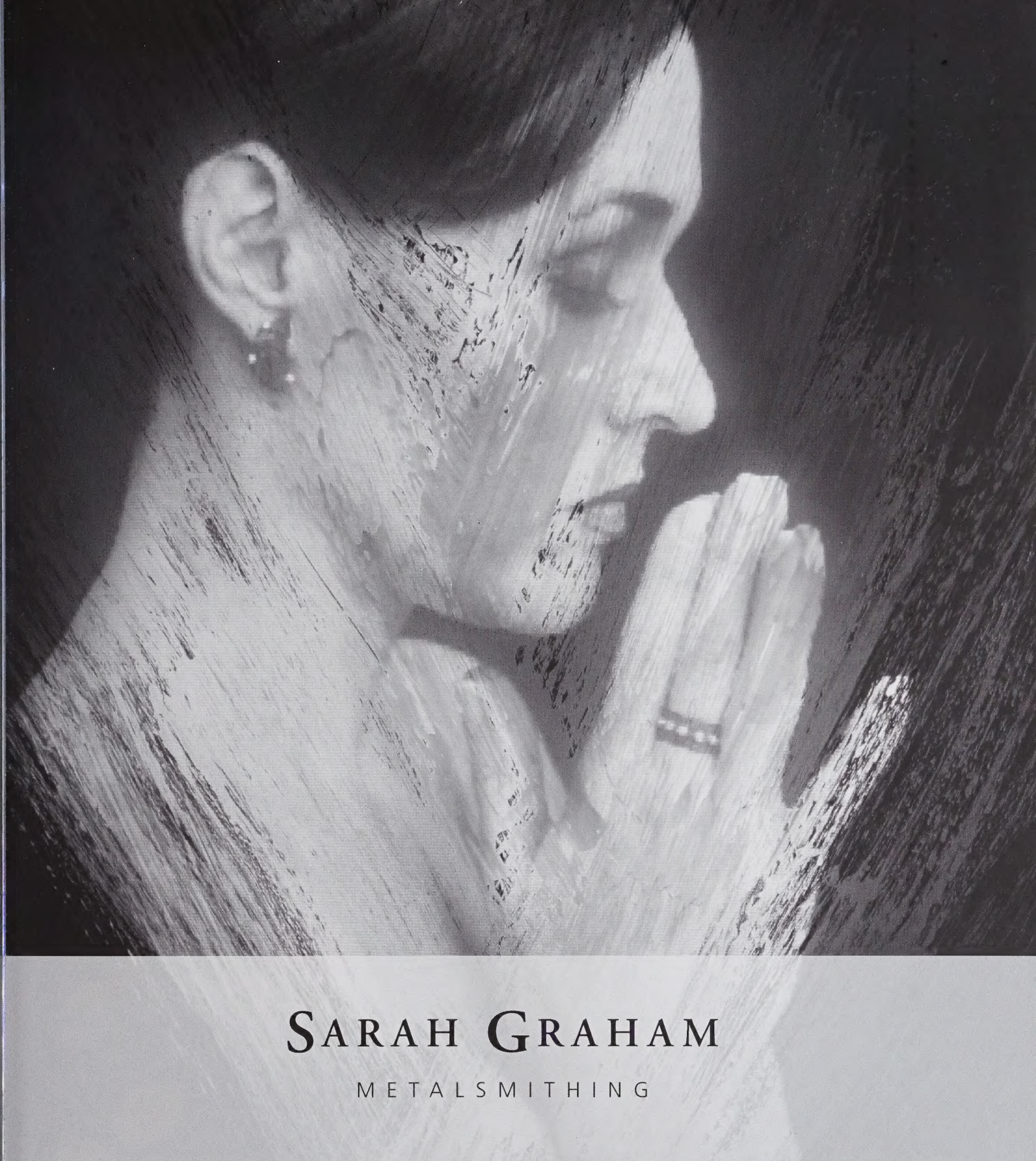

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METALSMITHING

Manzanita Earrings and Wide Pebble Bold Ring – Blackened Steel, White Gold and White Diamonds Photo – William Dobbs

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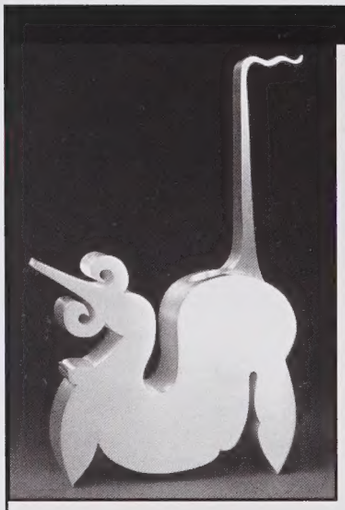

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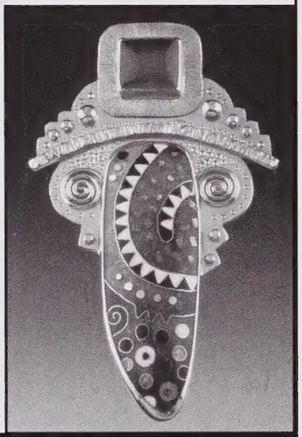

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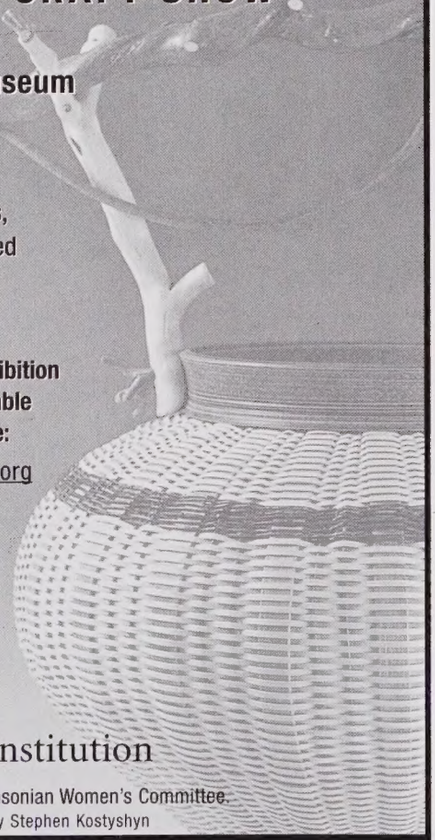

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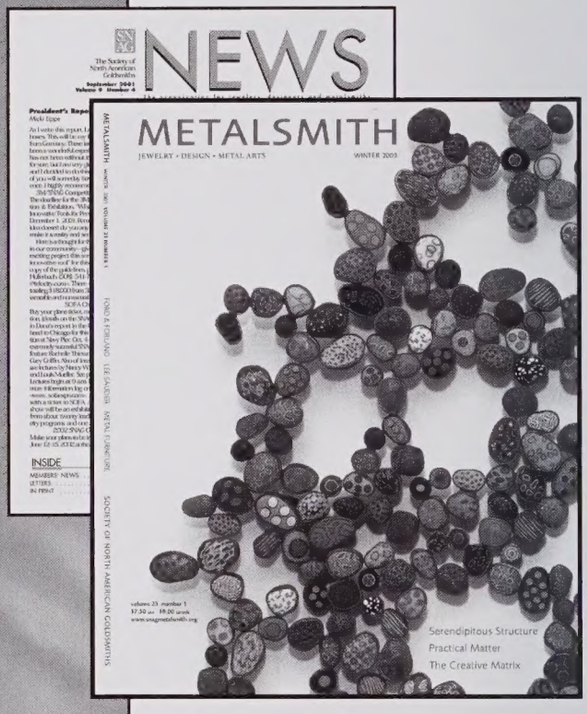

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2002

INTERVIEW

Susan Cummins

by Bruce Metcalf

Susan Cummins, 2002
Photo: John Wilson White

Susan Cummins Gallery closed its doors on June 30, 2002. Over the previous 18 years, Susan Cummins had become one of the most effective and committed exponents of contemporary American jewelry. When few galleries showed jewelry at the Chicago International New Art Forms expositions in the early 1990s, Cummins persisted, proving that art jewelry could be profitable. But more than that, she championed exceptional work that was not easy to sell. Cummins had a long-range vision, too: she realized that audience development was crucial. As a result, she was the driving force behind the Art Jewelry Forum, the jewelry collectors' group founded in 1997. She will be remembered for her tireless advocacy for the best of American art jewelry.

The following article recalls an interview with dealer Garth Clark (Metalsmith, Summer 1990), which marked the end of his jewelry project, CDK Gallery. The present interview was conducted in Philadelphia on November 7, 2002.

BM: Let me start with the question that all my colleagues have been asking. Why did you close your gallery?

SC: I'm exhausted by the experience of 28 years of being in the crafts and art world. I was actually running two businesses—one in the fine arts market and one in the crafts market. I think that gave me a unique view of the marketplace. But it also meant that I had to fight to be respected as a fine arts gallery that also happened to show jewelry, and I had to struggle with jewelry artists who weren't used to the demands I made of them, as well as an audience who didn't view jewelry with an educated eye. It's a battle out there on the front lines. The fears and limitations of all those involved can create huge obstacles to a successful business, and the challenges take an emotional toll. The retail world demands a lot of you. So, after years of setting up show after show, going to art fairs and doing all that is necessary to keep a business going as a sole proprietor, it began to wear on me. I got tired, and this expressed itself in my inability to be interested in shows that I was having and people that I was representing. I needed a sabbatical to recharge, but you can't take a year off from a small business, so I decided to close.

Part of it, too, was the death of my brother, which took the wind out of my sails, and it took me a while to recover. I had a grief crisis, I guess.

That said, I had a great time for many, many years. Most importantly, I met the most wonderful people. And I also kept things really interesting to myself and, therefore, interesting to my audience. I kept learning things, mainly from artists, and I myself would change. Then, what I learned would influence what I would show. I would pick new work according to what I found the most provocative or exciting direction in which to go. It's a very organic process and can be very creative.

The funny thing is that I always thought I was going to be like Ruth Braunstein or Paule Anglim in San Francisco, who are both in their eighties and still running galleries. That was always my fantasy, to be running a gallery as an elderly woman and still trying to make it happen. I really am surprised that I'm not doing that, and yet it feels like such a relief.

BM: Can running a gallery be fun?

SC: Yes, all things considered, running a gallery can be fun and very rewarding. It takes lots of energy, and it also helps to have lots of money and a good eye. However, right now I don't have any intention of running a gallery again. I am thinking of working on a few small projects. I only want to be responsible to a few artists at a time, and I would really like to concentrate much more on the collectors, the curators, and the writers. I can honestly tell you that when I had the gallery, I spent much more time talking to artists than I did to collectors. That's enjoyable, but not always optimal for business.

BM: Do you think, in retrospect, that maybe you handled too many jewelers?

SC: Absolutely. It got out of hand. In the past few years, I tried to cut down. At one point, I was handling probably 120 jewelers. So I cut back to about 50. I would have liked to show fewer, but there was a problem with that. I would have chosen jewelers based on the quality of their work, but they didn't make enough to create a critical mass, or I couldn't sell enough to allow me the luxury of showing only their work. So I had to show more artists than I might have wanted, just to survive.

BM: It has always seemed to me that one of the problems with art jewelry is that good work takes so long to make, there just isn't that much of it in the marketplace.

SC: I know; it's a problem. Jewelers do seem to take longer to make their work, but I am not convinced that it is only because jewelry is more labor-intensive. I think that for many of the jewelers I was showing, it also was because almost everybody taught and nobody had any time to do sustained work. When I had only a small number of pieces, I just couldn't do very much with it. It limited the resources I could afford to use in the marketing and selling.

I think that if jewelers want to be in a gallery and advance their careers as artists, then they have to take it

seriously, and not let teaching or anything else interfere. If they are first and foremost teachers, then they should not expect to have solo shows and fully developed careers in the gallery world. Some people can probably do both, but I'm not sure when they would sleep.

BM: Well, I don't know too many people who would quit their teaching jobs to be full-time studio jewelers. I think that would be asking too much. It almost sounds like you think the situation's impossible.

SC: I don't think the situation's impossible, but I do think that jewelers have to take the gallery marketplace more seriously if the audience and venues are to develop. I have always been interested in pushing things ahead, and I have been very frustrated in my efforts to develop and expand this market. Because of my unique perspective in dealing with both fine artists and jewelers, I can recognize differences in attitude and perceived responsibilities on the part of each group. Because the fine arts market structure has been in place a long time, artists assume their galleries are going to take care of the business of selling work. They may grumble about how effective it is, but they seem pretty convinced that it's a game they must play to succeed.

Many jewelers, on the other hand, have been exposed to the craft fair market, where they interact with their own audience. As a result, there is sometimes a practiced naiveté on the part of jewelers which allows them to make use of both systems to their best advantage. It tends to keep them mired in a marketplace that isn't made for the finest products the field has to offer. Some of the top artists in the field still do the craft fairs regularly. This creates a problem that runs very deep for the dealer. It also often creates a kind of mistrust that was not evident in my dealings with fine artists.

Jewelers could help the process a lot by clearly choosing where their loyalties lie. Then, if they want to show in a gallery, they need to produce a fully developed, original body of work, along with well-considered rationales for it. As a dealer, I had to feel as though a body of work was so good that I would do everything possible to make something happen. Then it would sell. It would be critically reviewed. Pieces would be acquired by museums. There would be a catalogue. The body of work needs to warrant the complete and full treatment. It can be promoted to the hilt, so to speak. But the number of bodies of work that I've gotten over the years that warranted that kind of treatment is very small. I feel that this is something that is needed to advance the field, as well as each individual artist. It is a lot to demand, but as a dealer I can only go as far as the artist takes me. Some people think a dealer can "make" an artist's career, and this may or may not be true, but without the work there is nowhere to go.

BM: What's the solution?

SC: Well, I don't know. Artists need the courage to gamble on doing their most outrageous best, and dealers need to build an ever-growing audience for that work. Of course, that's easier said than done.

Artists can also help to build an audience by simply realizing that they are communicating their ideas through the objects to other human beings. Sometimes I think jewelers are making things only for themselves or their colleagues.

I think it should be a requirement of every jewelry program in the country to have students experience what it's like to be a collector. Students should experience what it would be like to have an array of jewelry in front of them, and have to choose which one to buy, and for how much money. There is a difference between thinking your friend does cool stuff, and making a real financial decision. Put your money down and tell me you still really want it! Then they would wear it on a regular basis. Is it wearable? See how you like having your jewelry fall off, and having people comment on it every two seconds. Do you like that, or not? I mean, jewelers have to make some tough decisions. If they have any expectations from the marketplace, then they have to realize they're making things for an audience.

I also have been amazed at the gulf that exists between the artist and the marketplace. Artists and collectors both are often stunned by what the other is thinking or not thinking, as the case may be. There is very little dialogue between the two, and there are few venues in which it can take place—but it seems to be what everyone longs for. The artist wants his or her work to be appreciated and understood, and the collector wants to own a piece that they value for its skillful craftsmanship and layers of thought. Without a verbal exchange between them, however, it's hard for that to take place. Ideally, this would be encouraged and arranged by the dealer, but unfortunately that doesn't happen very often because of issues of trust. And sometimes, because of the personalities involved, it's not even desirable to have that exchange. Despite that, I believe that this is an area that truly needs developing if we expect there to be an educated, enthusiastic audience for jewelry.

BM: In the production world, jewelers are much more conscious of responding to their audience, because they actually meet their clientele at the craft fairs. But it seems most of them don't think beyond that, to issues like education and audience development.

SC: You know, in Garth Clark's article, he talked about how frustrated he was that people were just trying on jewelry and then deciding if it looked good on them and not thinking any further, and also that nobody in the fine arts world wanted to pay attention to jewelry. Unfortunately, his observations are still true, but the good news is that the market for art jewelry has increased tremendously in the 10 years since that interview. Somehow it gives me hope that with more people involved the chances of an educated audience increase.

When I first showed at SOFA, I was one of only two or three galleries who were showing any jewelry. But now there are more, and there are also a lot of dealers who are showing a little bit of jewelry along with other things. A lot of galleries have jumped on the jewelry bandwagon, and a lot of the glass collectors and ceramics collectors now can't help but see jewelry. I mean, it's there *en masse* and they can't help but be exposed to it. A lot of the people that have collected glass and ceramics—I know

this for a fact—either have gotten what they wanted to get in that field and aren't buying any more, or they're still collecting but the initial enthusiasm has worn off and they're looking for something else to collect. You have to understand that people who collect are people who love to collect. They love the process of finding out new things, of learning about a new field, the artists involved, the techniques involved, and so forth. And so some of those people are jewelry collectors now. They're slowly learning things, and they'll make their mark in the jewelry field because they will drive a lot of galleries and artists to perform at their best.

One of the great enablers of the growth of the craft marketplace has been collecting groups. In the fine arts world, museums or other institutions sponsor collecting groups, but all of the media-based groups in the crafts world have been started by collectors. They have developed a way for collectors to actually learn something about the medium that they're interested in. People become more appreciative of the skill required and the ideas that are enveloped by these objects. They go to various cities and countries and meet lots of artists and talk to lots of dealers and curators. They begin to know enough to buy good things. Then they encourage each other to make those purchases.

The only way that jewelry is ever going to take off is through the development of the people who buy it. An interesting case study could be made using the examples of three of the collectors who helped launch Art Jewelry Forum. I watched them change dramatically. They began by collecting really traditional and simple work that was very easy to wear; it was made by a studio jeweler and it was well done, but conservative. They were interested in collecting crafts and could be adventuresome there, but they had no sense of what else could be done in jewelry. So that's were we started. They came to SOFA, and as we talked, they became more educated and the world began opening to them. Once the Art Jewelry Forum started, they went on trips to jewelry studios. And after a few years, they became much more knowledgeable and curious.

Of the three, Donna Briskin was buying the most conservative jewelry; she just bought a few small-scale pieces and didn't really feel like she was a collector . She just really liked jewelry. Now, I think, she would consider herself a jewelry collector. She wears much more outrageous pieces. She knows a lot more about jewelry; sometimes I think she knows more about it than I do. I mean, she's out there looking around all the time. Susan Beech has put together a very adventuresome collection; I think it is one of the best in the country. And Sharon Campbell is now serving on the advisory committee of a museum that is collecting jewelry, and she is bringing a lot to the table with the education she has had over the years.

These people were educated and engaged. I could see them progress from the beginning stages to really finding their way through the offerings of artists to their particular tastes and interests.

BM: So connoisseurship is really about education?

SC: Absolutely. Education, information, and exposure. But I have to say the Art Jewelry Forum hasn't blossomed yet in the way that, say, the glass or wood groups have. I don't know why, but it may have something to do with the intimacy of the medium and the difficultly of displaying it for public viewing. Another interesting characteristic of the Art Jewelry Forum is that on almost all of the organized trips, the majority of people attending were dealers. They also need the exposure and education, but I wondered where all their collectors were.

All organizations like AJF need strong individuals with entrepreneurial and business-oriented skills to really get them going. Those who have worked on projects like this know how much dedication is needed to make them work. If it works, the result is that people buy jewelry and have a good time together. The groups become a social event where everybody learns about something they're interested in and sees their friends. Amazing things can happen. Whole areas of the craft world turn around because suddenly there's a group of people who know a little bit more, and they start to actually look and buy things, and help support the artists to continue doing their best work. Plus, the museums see that there's a support mechanism for this work, so they become more interested.

BM: That's good news, but I have to wonder how sophisticated buyers really are. Jewelers like myself accepted the idea of unwearable jewelry 20 years ago, and personally, I think some of the most interesting jewelry around is not wearable. But most collectors won't touch unwearable jewelry.

SC: It does take a long time, doesn't it? I think there will be a marketplace for unwearable jewelry if the marketplace for wearable jewelry is developed first. The market for unwearable jewelry is just like every other field: you build somebody up to it. I don't think somebody's going to leap into unwearable jewelry from nowhere. I don't think they're going to leap in from the fine arts world. I don't think they're going to leap in from the objects-oriented world, particularly. I think they're going to leap in from the wearable jewelry world.

BM: The presumption is that unwearable jewelry is closely connected to the fine arts world. That's what most students and teachers would tell you, if they were completely honest.

SC: What jeweler do you know who works in the fine arts world? If a jeweler really wants to make art, and to be interpreted that way, one has to play in the fine arts world. What jeweler do you know wants to play in the fine arts world?

BM: They all do.

SC: Which one *is* playing in the fine arts world?

BM: Right now, nobody that I know of.

SC: Frankly, it's a much, much tougher world to play in than the jewelry-oriented world. It has a vastly bigger audience, and thousands more galleries. When I closed the gallery, I didn't worry too much about helping my painters and sculptors find galleries to show in, but I was very worried about many of the jewelers. They just didn't

have the same variety or number of choices. The crafts world is smaller, which makes it a much more warm and friendly place than the fine arts world.

For the jeweler, the fine arts world can be pretty treacherous. There's a huge prejudice against anything that is jewelry-oriented, and I don't think that anybody's quite come up with a way to break down the physical or intellectual barriers of being a jeweler in the art world. There are fine artists who have done jewelry or jewelry-like objects, and that has been acceptable, but as of now—as far as I know—the tide doesn't flow the other way. For all of the art world's great interest in using the most bizarre and grotesque and unusual materials, some materials they particularly don't want to let in are gold and silver and stones or anything that's identified as jewelry. It is hard to even have a discussion with fine arts galleries, critics, or curators about the field. They feel uninformed, and yet they have a resistance to becoming informed. This hasn't changed much over the years. The market for jewelry has had to be built outside the fine arts structure.

BM: So this is an education question.

SC: It's an education question again. But it's not just that. I can only name a few jewelers in this country that are doing work that has conceptual substance and excellent execution. I may be wrong, or blind, but I still feel like there aren't enough smart jewelers. There's not a critical mass of jewelry artists out there making work of substantial interest and conception and execution that would matter to an arts community and to an expanded audience.

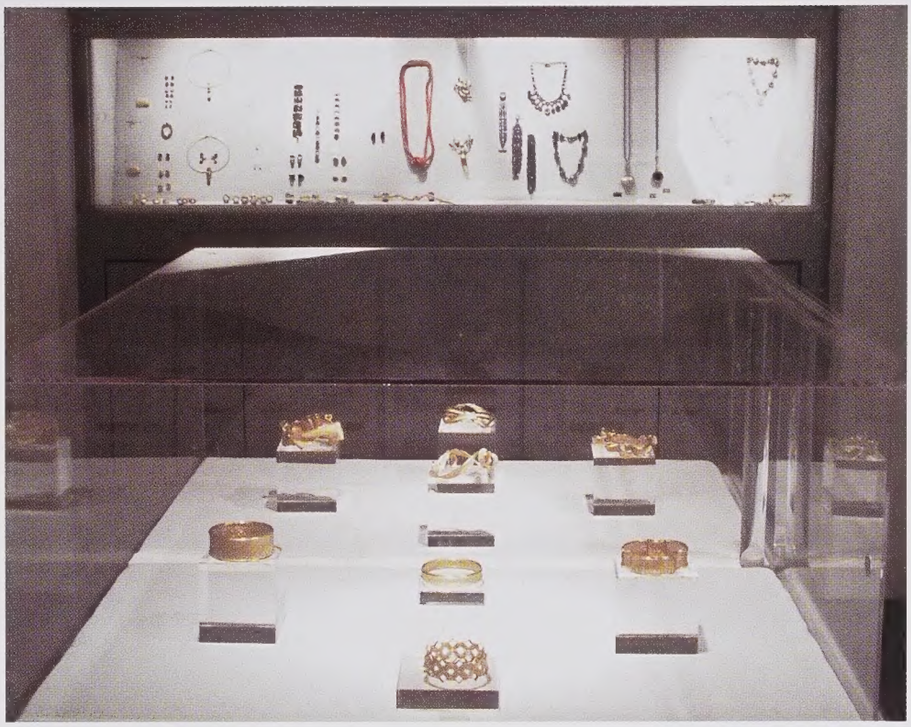
I'm sure young jewelers are being educated, and they're coming along. But are they able to continue to work after they get out of school? If they want to pursue the marketplace, are they being taught how to do it? Are they pounding down the doors of the New York dealers—or dealers anywhere—saying, "I'm a young artist and I have to show here! You have to show me!" Are they forming cooperatives where they show each other's work? There has to be a huge fire underneath any artist before anybody's going to pay attention. There's too much going on in the world. People aren't going to pay attention. You can't be a quiet little jeweler sitting in your studio saying, "Damn, I wish someone would show this work," and expect anybody to notice you, no matter how fabulous your work is.

BM: That was your job! That's why we all turned to you with longing in our eyes.

SC: Well, I did the best I could. I hope I did some good trailblazing while I had the chance. I took the people I thought were best in the field and made as big a deal about them as I could afford.

I do think that it would be better for the jewelry world not to think so much about trying to get into the fine arts world. People should concentrate on the tradition that they're coming from. The only way that the jewelry world will get anywhere is to build on itself. Established artists have to lead the way for the younger or unknown artists, and then they will follow and hopefully push a little farther along the path.

BM: How do you think the work in the field has developed during the almost 20 years you've been handling jewelry?



Mary Lee Hu exhibition, Susan Cummins Gallery, 2000

SC: I can only really speak about the leading edge of American jewelry. It's gotten much more complex, and some of it is conceptually based, which I don't remember being the case years ago. I think that the whole field is a lot more interesting than it was 15 years ago, 18 years ago. People are much more skilled at making things. There is a greater depth of thought and craftsmanship. And the market has definitely developed, too. It can accommodate a lot of the more difficult work, both conceptually and in terms of wearability. The work has driven that process. But as you too have pointed out, it still has a long way to go. There are not enough leading-edge jewelers, and there are not enough venues to develop the audience. But it is developing slowly. The respectably long list of jewelry-oriented shows in museums, university galleries, and art centers is a kind of measure of that.

BM: Are you going to stay engaged with jewelry in the future?

SC: Of all of the artists that I showed at the gallery, I have to say that some of the most engaging, intelligent, serious, thoughtful people that I showed were jewelers. I have a great fondness for those people, so I have an inclination to do something for them.

BM: Are you optimistic about the future of art jewelry?

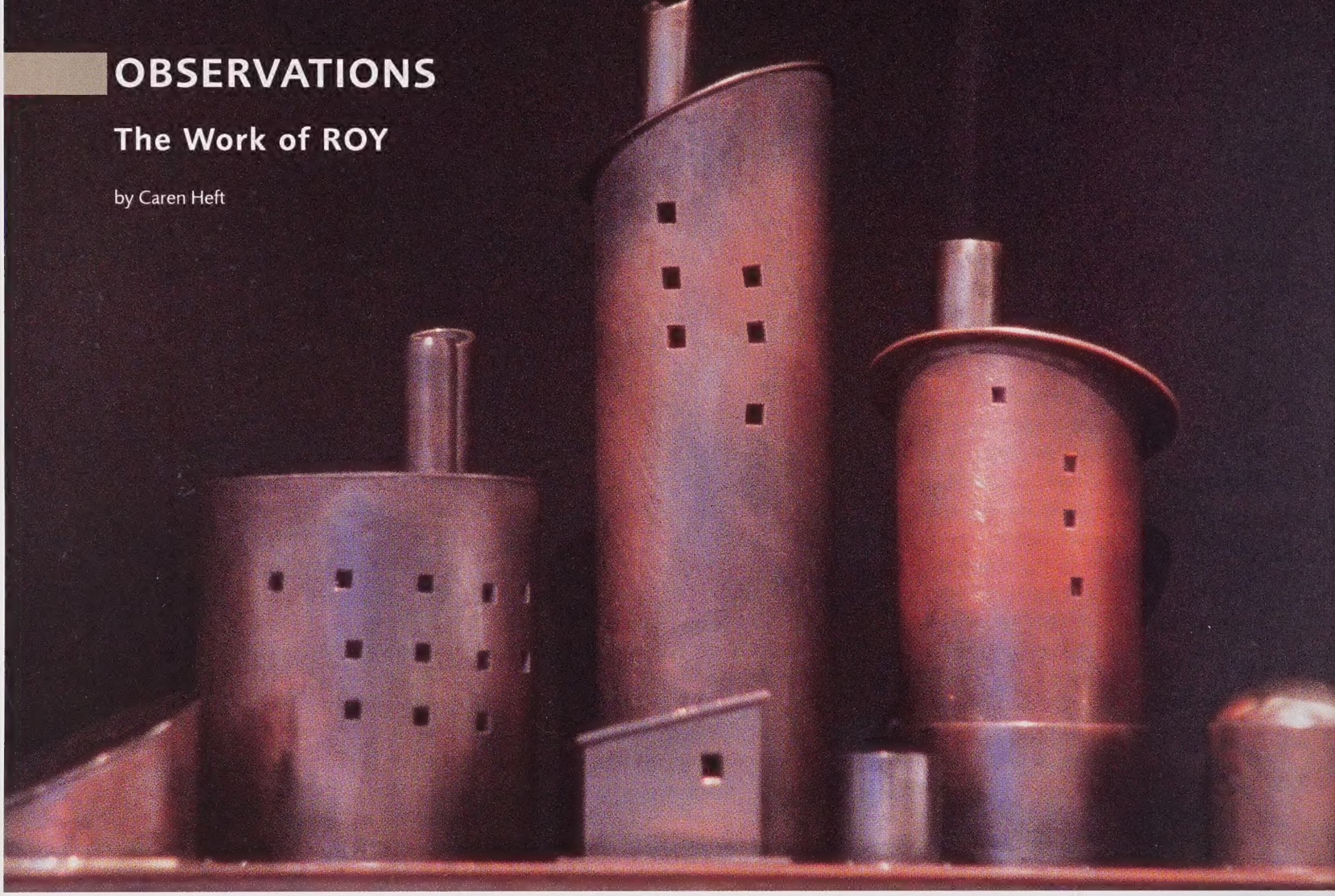
SC: Of course! As critical as I may have sounded at times in this interview, I still see a hopeful future for contemporary jewelry. As long as people continue to make good, strong, original work and there's an ongoing education of new artists, collectors, curators, critics, and dealers, art jewelry is going to make its way into the world. The artists lead the way. The rest of us can only follow. ⧗

Bruce Metcalf is a jeweler and occasional writer. He had been represented by Susan Cummins Gallery since 1990.

OBSERVATIONS

The Work of ROY

by Caren Heft



Towers of Pittsburgh, 2002
brass, copper, wood, electronics engineered by David Parlour, liquid smoke, light, fan
12 1/2 x 14 x 5 1/2"
Photo: David Parlour
Courtesy the Mattress Factory Museum

Twenty-first-century artists consider how best to relate to our changing world in a meaningful way. Pittsburgh artist ROY has chosen just two formats to present her worldviews: the bracelet, an object of adornment that she has always explored, and the candlesnuffer, a domestic object little considered today.

ROY's early bracelets appropriated existing artworks, as in her 1998 *Jackie O* bracelet, which borrowed Warhol's famous painting. Almost simultaneously she developed a series of city bracelets. Recently her bracelets display a creative leap in response to 9/11, with such works as *Godzilla with Fez* and *Level Red*, which abandon appropriation while continuing to depict cityscapes. The candlesnuffers have also evolved. Once in the form of buildings with chimneys through which the snuffed candle smoke was emitted, they have become freestanding, sometimes smoking, small sculptures.

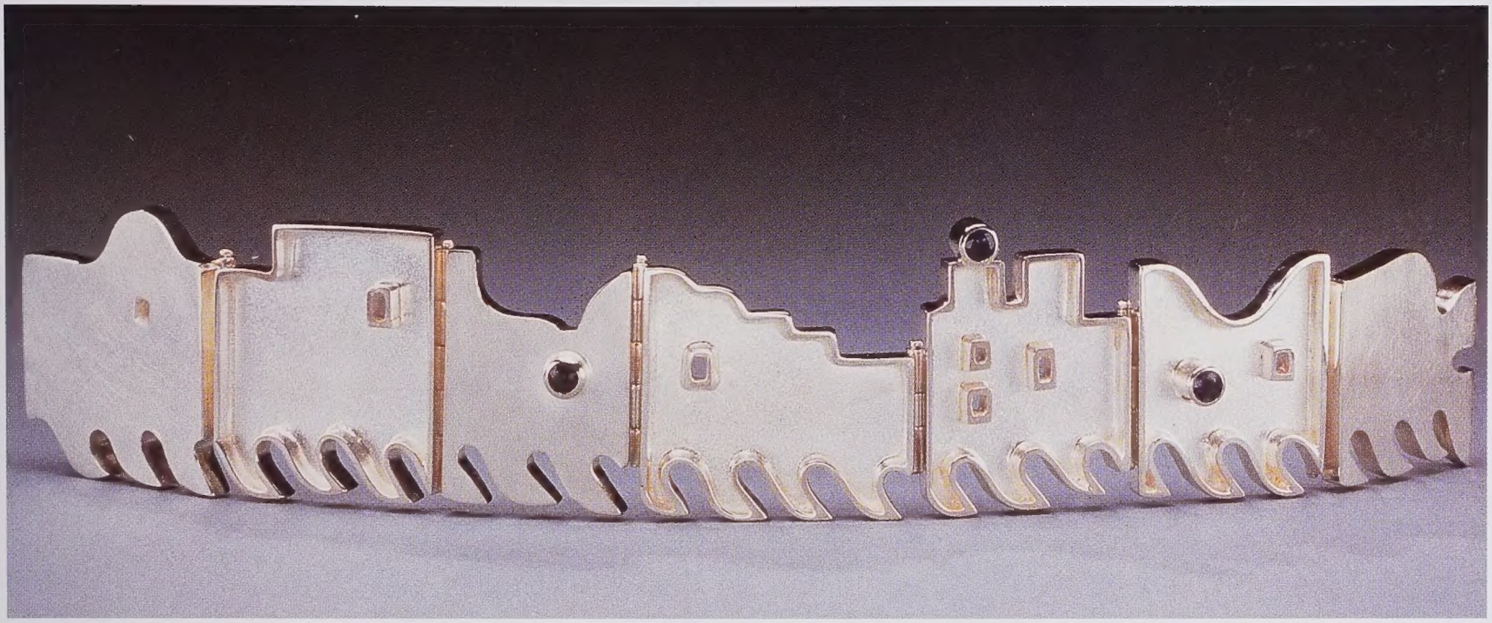
The linked-panel format of the bracelets gives them a power beyond their scale, making them seem almost monumental. *Aegean Bracelet* (a "city" bracelet) incorporates three sapphires, which suggest the blue Aegean Sea and punctuate the low skyline as windows. The wavelike bottom edge of the bracelet clearly indicates that the low buildings have their feet in the sea. ROY's Greek heritage and her visits to the Aegean islands are an obvious influence.

93rd Floor is considerably darker, as it refers to 9/11 and the point of impact at the World Trade towers. Buildings adjacent to the one with a diamond marking the point of impact seem to lean away from that building, as if to disassociate from it. The patina applied to the metal gives it a painterly quality and evokes darkness.

The *Godzilla with Fez* bracelet at first glance reflects a lighter mood, featuring a red, yellow, and blue cartoon-like city (the color added with non-reflective Plexiglas). Yet Godzilla looms over the skyline in his red fez; the fez, a reference to Islam, changes the tone of the bracelet from amusing to anxious, as if the threat of terrorism loomed large over the city. *93rd Floor* and *Godzilla* both also incorporate line drawings, for added visual richness.

Level Red sheds the cityscape format and becomes an ominous warning of present danger. The words "Level Red" are spelled out with machine-like wheels below each letter and a red stone above the "e" in Red. Color has become charged with a new meaning as ROY plays on the intermittent warnings that place certain parts of the country under a level yellow or level red state of alert. The warning juxtaposed with the train-like structure increases the ominous mood.

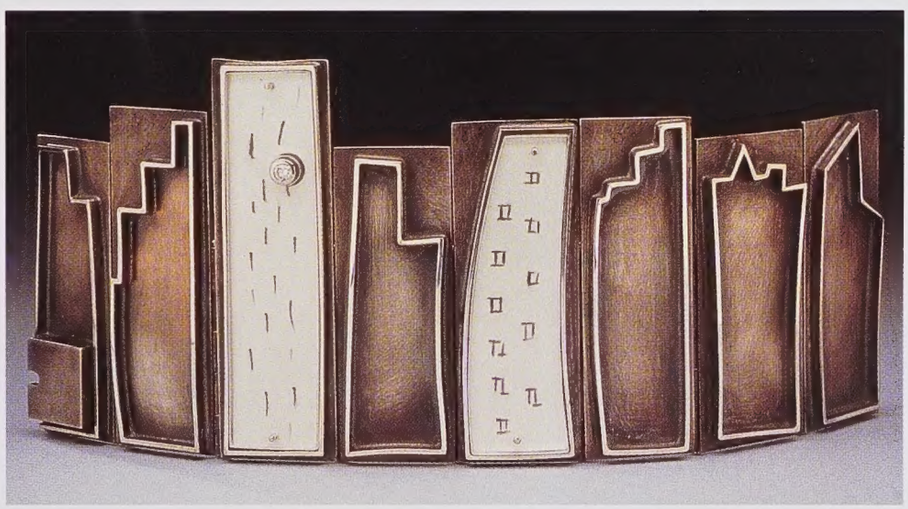
These recent works ask questions rather than giving us

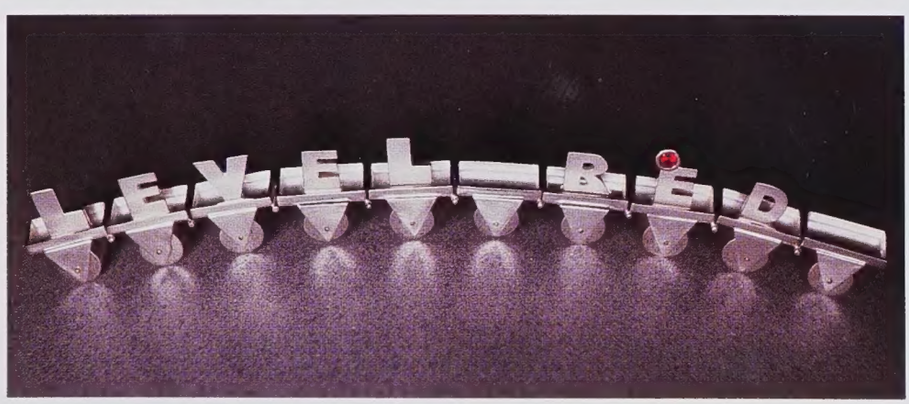


serenity and calm. It is a pleasure to see an artist change directions successfully, engaging us on a deeper level and forcing us to consider a more dangerous world, even in our choice of adornment.

The small sculptures, the candlesnuffers, and the very recent *Towers of Pittsburgh* have also turned the corner from amusing objects to a clear sense of a threatening world. *Towers of Pittsburgh* is a small sculpture of a dark skyline. Instead of an abstract cityscape, we see rooftop structures, with equipment sheds, chimneys and other industrial accoutrements. These towers and sheds and vents light up and emit smoke for a far more menacing vision. The small structures of the earlier candlesnuffers have become larger, self-contained, and considerably uncomfortable. While ROY's craftsmanship is exquisite, her objects beautiful, it is her intellectual and narrative content that gives the work its power. ⧗

Caren Heft is director of the Edna Carlsten Gallery at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and a letterpress bookmaker.





top to bottom
Aegean Bracelet, 2002
sapphires, silver, nickel
3/8 x 3/8 x 8 1/4" (open)
Photo: Dean Powell

93rd Floor, 2002
20k diamond, silver, hinging, non-reflective Plexiglas, nickel
7 5/8 x 3 x 1/4" (open)
Photo: Dean Powell

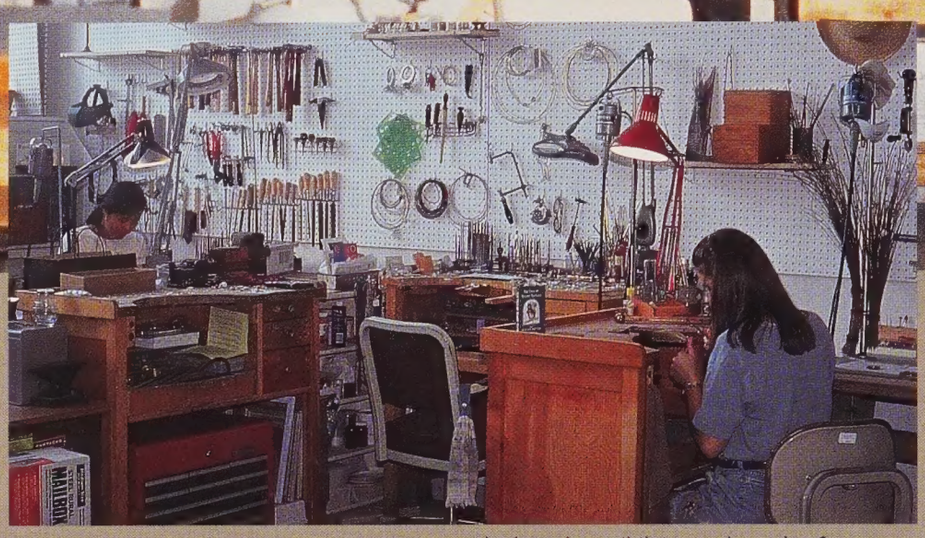
Godzilla with Fez, 2002
silver, rag paper, non-reflective Plexiglas, nickel, brass
8 1/4 x 2 3/4 x 3/8" (open)
Photo: Dean Powell

Level Red Bracelet, 2002
ruby, silver, silver wheels, washers, axels, brass rivets
1 3/8 x 9 1/2 x 1/2" (open)
Photo: David Parlour

STUDIO VISIT

Metalpeople

by Donald Friedlich



Metalpeople in their studio, 2003
Left to right: Mary Harkness, Linda Seebauer, Lisa Ferin, Agnes Chwae, Lynn Whitford
Photo: Donald Friedlich

Linda Seebauer, right, and Agnes Chwae, left, working at their benches, 1998
Photo: Lynn Whitford

Artists with shared sensibilities and needs often come together to form co-operative studios in order to reduce overhead, share equipment, and develop a greater sense of community. In 1989, with these goals in mind, Paulette Werger, Lynn Whitford, and Agnes Chwae, three friends who had been in graduate school together at the University of Wisconsin-Madison metals program, formed Metalpeople in Madison. Jeweler Jim Charneski, whose background and training was in the jewelry trade, soon joined the group.

The four metalsmiths spent a year looking for a suitable studio, then developed a business plan and applied for a space in a newly evolving business incubator building. The purpose of an incubator is to subsidize and nurture the growth and development of small businesses; the goal is for the business to become self-sufficient and leave the nest after a period of three years. This period was extended in the case of Metalpeople, and they were allowed to stay for seven years. In 1996, they moved to their current location, a former bus depot in a light industrial section of Madison.

Today, two members of the original group, Whitford and Chwae, remain; they've been joined by Linda Seebauer, Lisa Ferin, and Mary Harkness. In early 2003, Yuyen Chang became the newest addition to the studio.

The studio is a roughly 1,200-square-foot space that has high ceilings and good light, in a well-kept multiuse building. A fifth of the space is occupied by hat maker Renee Roeder. Each person spends about $150 a month for the studio rent, maintenance, and utilities. The building's other tenants include Guild.com, the online craft marketing and publishing company, an architectural model maker, a noodle company, and a diaper service.

The fact that Metalpeople has survived for fourteen years is notable and seems at least in part due to some intelligent foresight on the part of the original group. Instead of structuring a more formal legal entity, like a corporation, they kept things simple and, more importantly, flexible. While they split the initial startup costs (such as plumbing and electrical and ventilation systems) and continue to share the ongoing costs, the equipment is generally owned by an individual artist. They each have their own hand tools and share the use of the larger and more costly equipment, such as the casting machine, jump shear, and stakes. Thus each artist has access to facilities superior to those any one individual

could afford alone. The advantage of the informal structure of Metalpeople is that when a member leaves, it isn't like a divorce; no lawyers need be involved. The departing member simply takes his or her own possessions, and the remaining group looks for a suitable replacement. Those initial startup costs are then amortized to any new member.

The background and technical areas of focus of the current group members vary widely. Whitford is well known for her highly skilled raised and fabricated hollowware installations of groups of patinated bottles. Her forms are often metal reproductions of old glass bottles or scientific apparatus. Chwae makes distinctive patinated vessels as well. She often adds decorative elements integrated into the rims and bases of her pots and sometimes utilizes chased surfaces. She also does commissioned jewelry and teaches part- time at Madison Area Technical College. Seebauer, who received her MFA from UW-Madison in 1997 and a fellowship from the Wisconsin Arts Board in 1998, also teaches part-time. Her sculpture and jewelry is inspired by natural themes of growth. Harkness is a pediatrician retired from active practice. She has taken metals courses at UW-Madison and is an avowed workshop participant. Ferin has a master's degree in archeology and came to jewelry-making through her mother, as well as through her archeological studies with a craft specialization.

The great unknown factor in forming a group studio is the interpersonal dynamic. While the members of Metalpeople acknowledge they have had good luck in this regard, they also emphasize the importance of sensitivity, consideration, and trust. Their ultimate goal is for each member to have a comfortable and satisfying place to work.

The camaraderie of a group studio provides relief from what can be an isolating studio practice. Also, because it is next to impossible to be an expert at every metalsmithing technique, the members' diverse expertise provides the added benefit of on-site technical and artistic input.

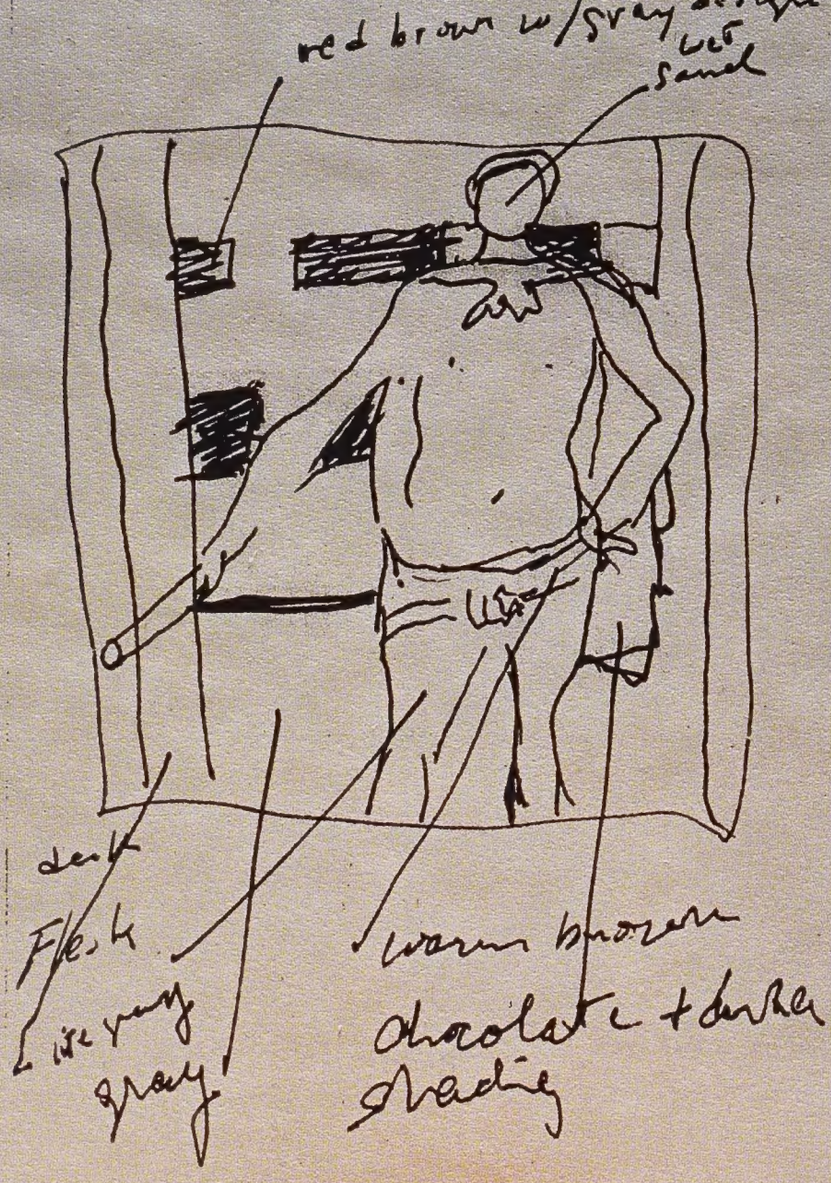
When they leave school, students often face many difficulties in finding a way to continue making the work they love. They are suddenly without a well-equipped studio, the support and feedback of their peers and faculty, and the financial means to build these resources on their own. Because of a jeweler's relatively modest space needs, a shared studio can provide a viable answer to many of these challenges. Metalpeople is an excellent template for the establishment of a successful group studio. ⧫

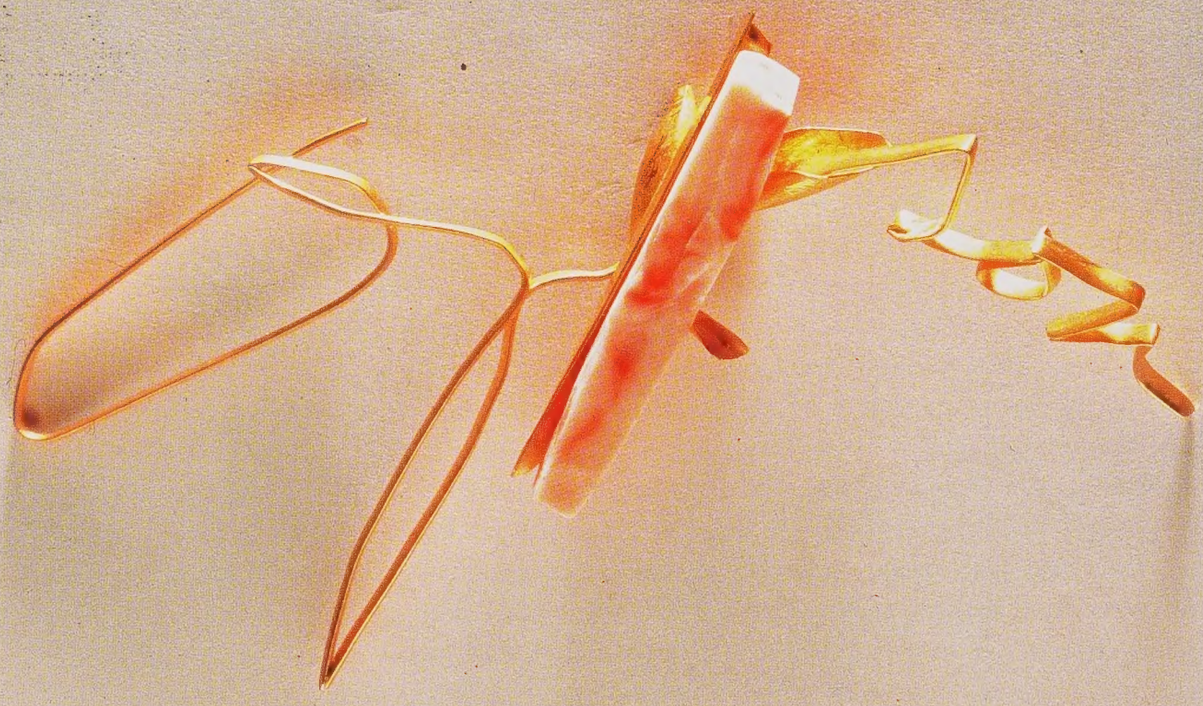
Donald Friedlich is a jeweler in Madison, Wisconsin, and a former SNAG President.

clockwise from left
Linda Seebauer
Implements to Nurture Series #4, 1997
bronze, sterling, patina
1 x 7 1/2 x 1"
Photo: Jim Wildeman

Agnes Chwae
Alpine Lake, 2001
pewter
4 1/2 x 11 1/2 x 11 1/2"

Lynn Whitford
Six Characters in Search of an Author, 1999
copper, brass, patina, wood shelf, oil paint
36 x 15 1/2 x 9 1/2 "
Photo: Angela Webster





Or-Son (brooch), 2002
fine gold, coral
3 1/4 x 4 x 1"

not wait to act

Metaphors in Metal

Manfred Bischoff's Structuralist Jewelry

by Patricia Harris and David Lyon

Manfred Bischoff has a fascination with language, a sardonic wit, and an unerring eye for simple beauty. Born and trained in Germany, he has worked in Munich and Berlin, but years ago he relocated to Tuscany. In February 2002 he spent the month as artist-in-residence at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, and in June he returned for his first major solo museum exhibition in North America.

Weber's Lecture (brooch), 1999
fine gold, coral
3 1/2 x 2 1/4 x 1/4"
Collection Dr. Karl Bollman, Vienna

Like many Europeans of his generation (he was born in 1947), Bischoff is fluent in several languages, including German, English, French, and Italian. And, as an artist of his generation, he is similarly versed in aesthetic theory that arises from deep-structure linguistics.

One condition of his residency at the Gardner was that he undertake a project inspired by some aspect of the institution and its collection. It's an irony worthy of Bischoff's own sensibilities that, surrounded by thousands of paintings, sculptures, and decorative arts spanning 30 centuries, he ultimately drew his inspiration from a scribbled note he found in the archives.

One of the museum's many treasures is a Piero della Francesca fresco of Hercules, painted around 1475 on the wall of his own house in Borgo Sansepolcro. The only Piero fresco known outside of Italy, it suffered severe damage over the centuries but was restored in 1999. As Bischoff examined the correspondence among the conservators, he stumbled on a phrase—"do not wait to act ... if you are ready"—that he found electrifying. In his mind, it was the perfect declaration of the essential prerequisite to the creative act. It provided a point of entry, a way to penetrate the painting and make it the springboard for his own work.

To comprehend Bischoff's attachment to language, it is necessary to understand how he works. Although he makes jewelry, he insists, "I am creating language. If I find a sentence or a theme I like, then the piece is done. I must only search for how to do it."

In the case of the brooch inspired by his stay at the Gardner, the command, "Do not wait to act

... if you are ready," signified the essence of Hercules, the man of heroic action. Bischoff's preliminary drawing of the piece (mounted as the background board at the exhibition) includes a detailed sketch of Piero's composition, with the conservator's advice written around the edges.

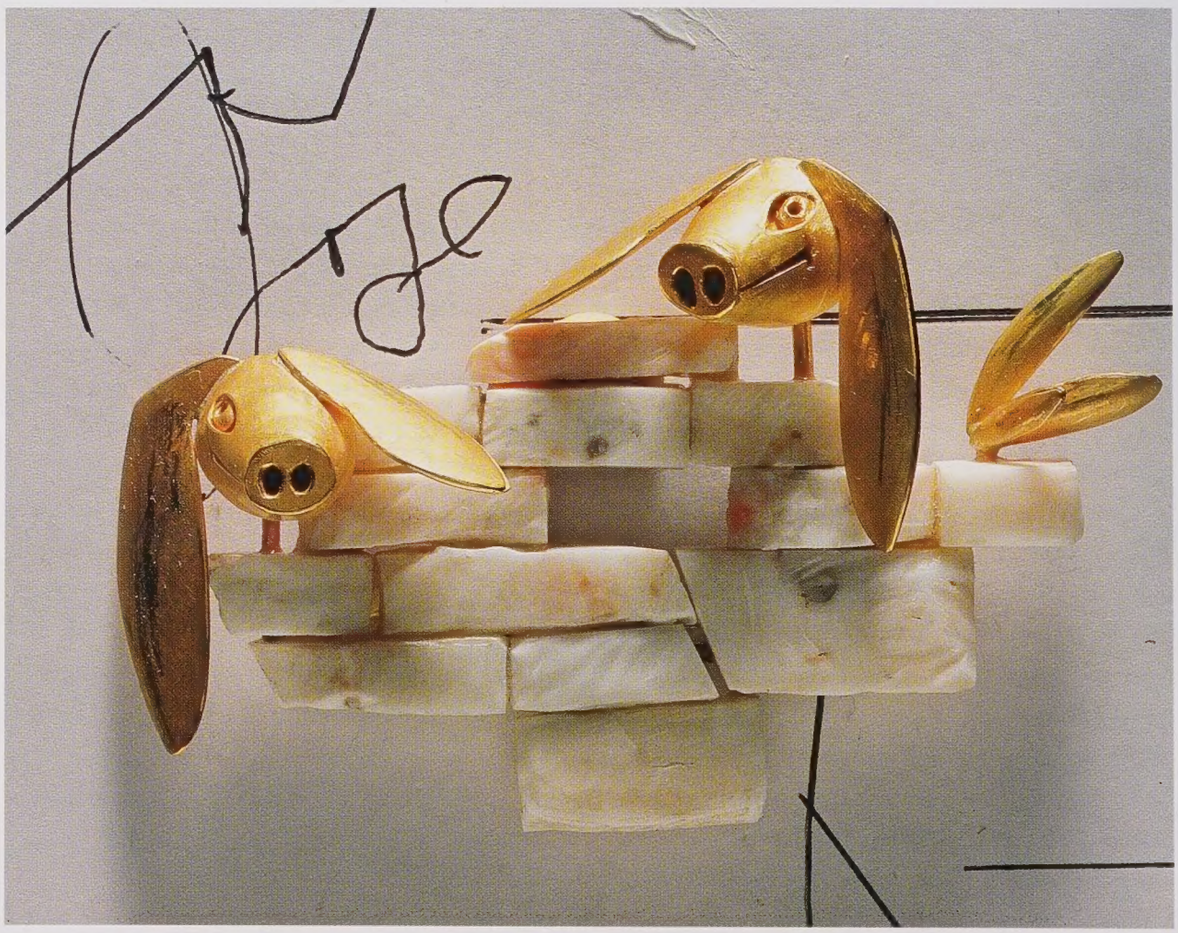
"'Not wait to act if you are ready'—it's a very explosive idea," Bischoff explains. "To know if you are ready, you have to feel the tension within yourself—and then the gesture flows out."

Bischoff executed the brooch in a flowing cursive script of gold wire. The composition follows Piero, divided in the center by a diagonal bar of coral that separates rising from falling motion, anticipation from execution. On close examination, the script spells out the title of the piece, *Or-Son*, which translates roughly as "central pedestal" (as in the centerpiece of the exhibition) and, in a bit of cross-linguistic legerdemain, "son of gold" (as in Hercules, son of Zeus).

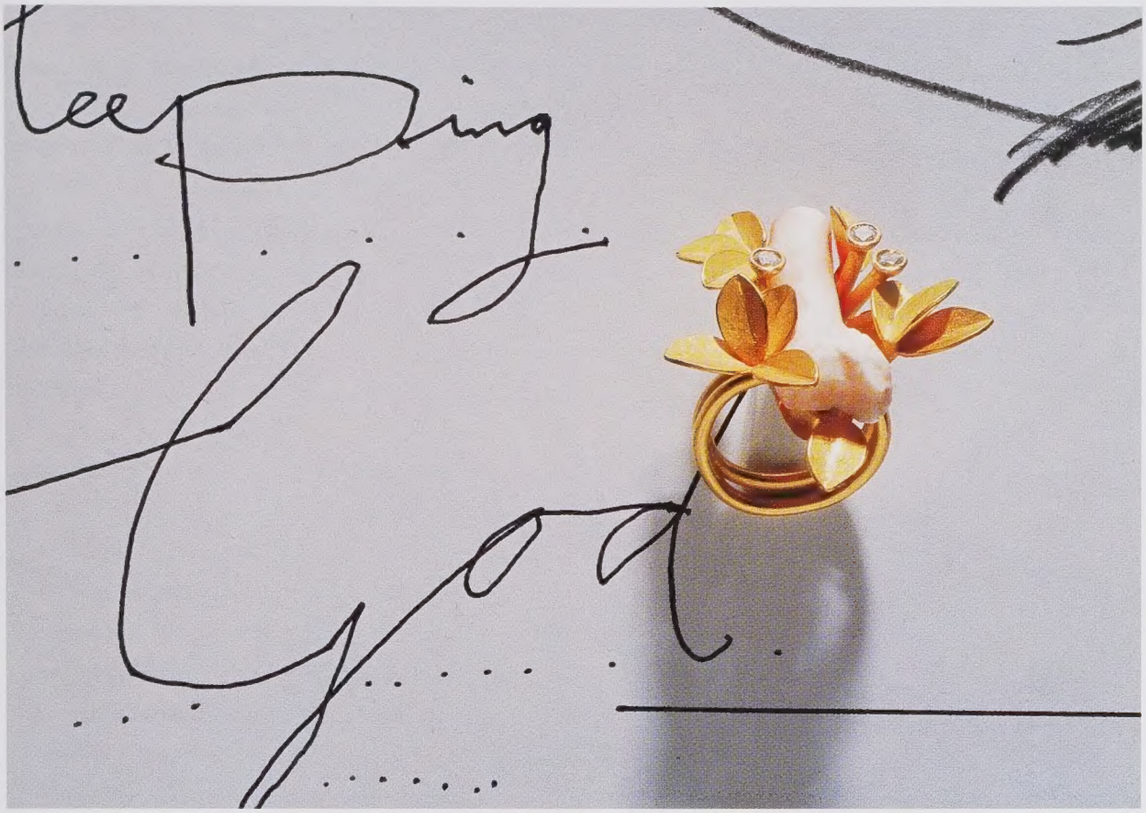
"To know if you are ready, you have to feel the tension within yourself—and then the gesture flows out."

The concept of multiple meanings (and multiple interpretations) was central to the work that Bischoff chose for his Gardner exhibition, which included an additional 20 pieces of jewelry made between 1997 and 2002. Several of the pieces have art-historical or mythological references. The 1998 ring *Sleeping God*, for example, uses a piece of phallus-shaped coral laid on the horizontal to represent the great Greek god of the id, Pan, as a recumbent (but relentlessly tumescent) sleeper. Rising around him in shiny ebullience are three nymphs, represented by small diamonds on stems of gold. There is a gentle whimsy in the conceit of nymphs as diamonds, and the randy goat-god as delicate coral. It helps, perhaps, to know that Bischoff apprenticed as a commercial jeweler. "For five years I built only diamond works in white gold," he says, adding that he developed an antipathy for white gold (and no great love of diamonds) during the period. In Bischoff's world, even materials accrete meaning. His private aesthetic grammar—that diamonds are more showy than precious—signifies that the nymphs have more flash than substance.

Bischoff works principally in gold that comes from South African krugerrands that he rolls into sheets and draws into wire. There is just enough copper in the amalgamation to produce .917 fine gold, which has a color that pleases Bischoff and a hardness appropriate to jewelry. He disdains



Baghdad sub rosa (brooch), 1999
fine gold, coral
2 1/2 x 3 x 1/4"
Collection Dr. Karl Bollman, Vienna



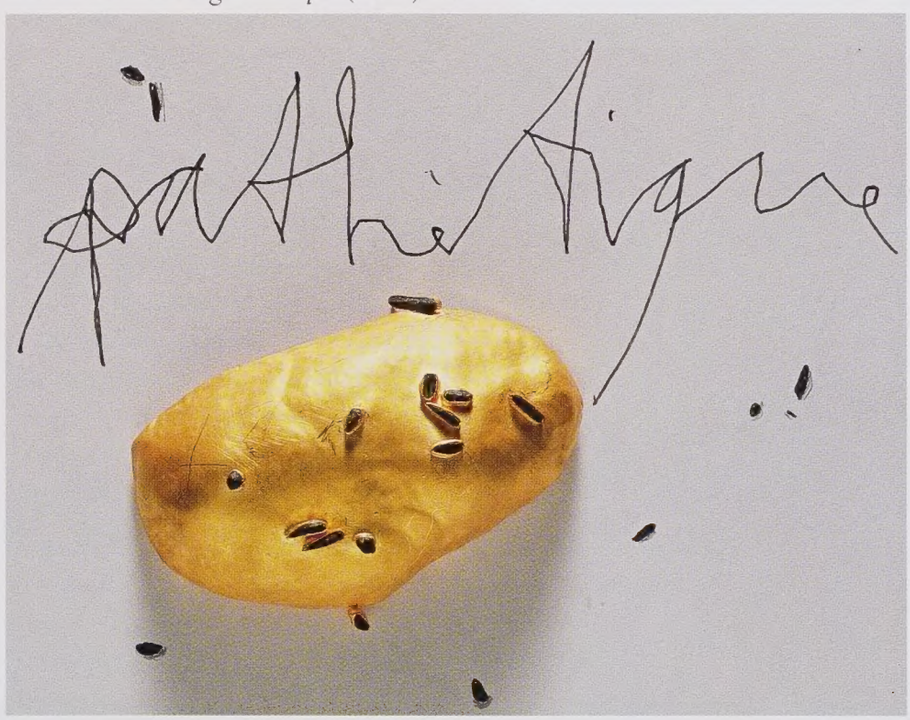
Sleeping God (ring), 1998
fine gold, coral, diamonds
1 x 1 1/4 x 3/4"
Courtesy Helen Drutt: Philadelphia

highly polished surfaces—commercial jewelry houses polish their gold so brightly because it is such poor quality, he claims—in favor of a matte finish that shows off the inherent color of the metal. He also frequently draws on the matte surface with a steel stylus to add detail. Bischoff's other principal material is coral, sourced from reefs near Hawaii, that ranges in color from nearly alabaster white to a fleshy pink. He employs the coral to evoke the erotic, sensual qualities of human skin.

Interestingly enough, Bischoff opted for gold rather than coral to represent a woman's abdomen in his 2002 brooch, *Madonna del Parto*, inspired by a 1465 Piero della Francesca fresco in Monterchi, Italy. The Virgin Mary's time of delivery was an unusual representation in Piero's time, and Bischoff found Piero's visual grammar even more startling. The artist showed the Madonna's robe parting both in the middle, as might be expected as she delivered her child, and along one side.

Art historians, says Bischoff, "spoke only of one exit. I was interested in the second opening Piero made." Stripping away the garments to a sheet-gold surface inscribed with lines to suggest pubic hair, Bischoff demystifies the naked torso of one of the iconographic figures of Christianity with the bluntness of the nude representation and adds yet another mystery by creating the labia of a second set of genitals.

"The work does explicitly reference the body—the entrance and exit of the Madonna," he says, suggesting perhaps the Conception via the second opening. The nudity of the Madonna violates one of the traditions of religious art, but Bischoff often marries the carnal and the spiritual; the sensual body is never far away in his work. The earrings *La Lupa* (2002) reduce the legendary she-wolf who suckled Romulus and Remus, founders of Rome, to the bare mythological essentials of her hanging dugs.



Pomme de Terre-Pathetique Tragique (brooch), 2002
fine gold, coral
3 1/2 x 2 1/4 x 3/4"

Bischoff's bluntness about sexuality is intended to strike viewers as crass, perhaps even shocking.

Madonna del Parto (brooch), 2002
fine gold, coral
1 1/2 x 3 x 1/4"

DONNA DELL PA

At some level, he is trying to paralyze the analytical mind. One of the most abstract compositions in the Gardner show was a 1999 piece titled *Highest Activity–Widest Passivity*. The brooch has two small skull-like objects, one elevated in what appears to be a gold rocking chair, the other perched at the edge of a bed of planar surfaces. The brooch's enigmatic label—Bischoff designed the entire exhibition, from the plinths to the wall texts to the drawings on which pieces of jewelry were mounted— informs us that the "highest form of thinking should remain passive while acting." In other words, "don't think too much."

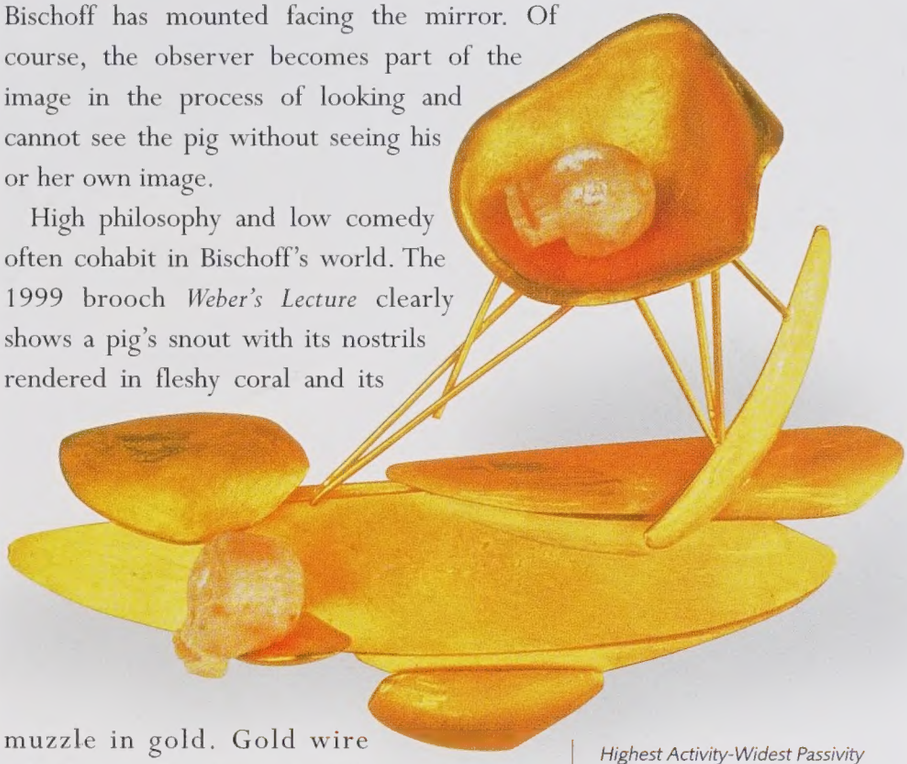
It's a paradoxical pronouncement from a jeweler whose art is charged with intellectualism. But Bischoff's insistence on short-circuiting the analytical brain follows Structuralist theory by maintaining that the powers of the unconscious are manifest in the inherent structure of language. Unself-conscious speech (and, by extension, other forms of expression) taps into the central creative power of the mind. Surrealism and Structuralism agree on this point, revealing their common roots in Freudian orthodoxy.

In designing the exhibition, Bischoff made sure that each piece of jewelry was displayed on a board with a drawing and title of the work that would serve to illuminate both the origin of the piece and its external intellectual correspondences. "It was a question of choreography," he says.

"I didn't want to leave them alone and naked in the cases." For Bischoff, the pieces of jewelry function best as half of a dialog. When they are not on display, he observes, they are complemented by the wearer.

The golden object, then, becomes a physical metaphor for the concept that inspires Bischoff. But he clearly likes his metaphors with a slightly goofy edge that keeps them from being predictable. Wit forms a defensive protection for the work, allowing it to be quickly grasped by the handle of gentle irony or broad pun. Thus, the 1998 ring entitled *Unschärferelation* refers to Werner Heisenberg's famous principle of indeterminacy—that an object being observed is altered by the act of observation. Indeed, the central device of the small ring is a mirror that makes it easier to see the snout of a pig that Bischoff has mounted facing the mirror. Of course, the observer becomes part of the image in the process of looking and cannot see the pig without seeing his or her own image.

High philosophy and low comedy often cohabit in Bischoff's world. The 1999 brooch *Weber's Lecture* clearly shows a pig's snout with its nostrils rendered in fleshy coral and its muzzle in gold. Gold wire relief creates boar's bristles. What could such an image have to do with the physicist Hans Weber? As it turns out, Bischoff was examining a facsimile of notes that Albert Einstein took during a lecture by Weber at Princeton University. Scribbled on one page is the scientific notation for the freezing point of water under normal atmospheric pressure, zero degrees Celsius. Einstein wrote the temperature as 0°C. "It looked like a pig," Bischoff says, shrugging. The analytical brain has been short-circuited, and the unconscious has spoken: *Pig!*

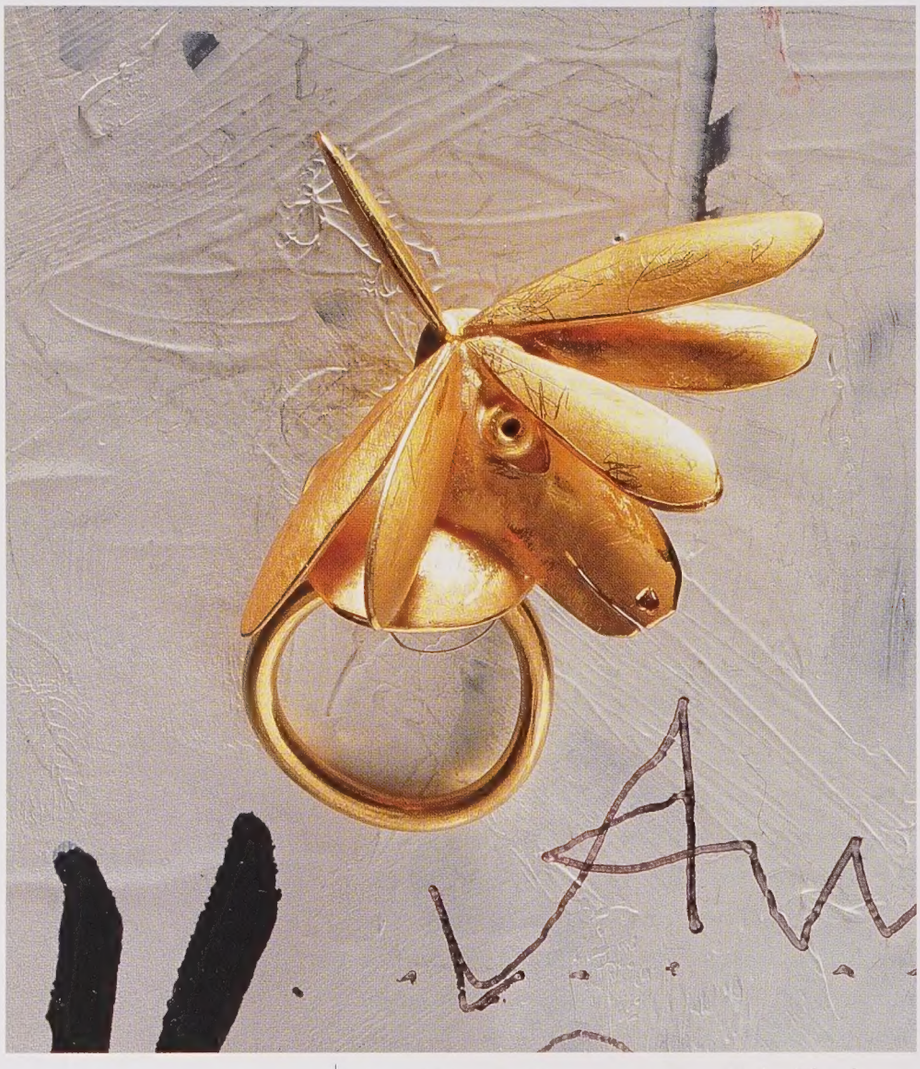


Highest Activity-Widest Passivity (brooch), 1999
fine gold, coral
3 1/4 x 4 x 1 1/4"
Courtesy Helen Drutt: Philadelphia

Wit forms a defensive protection for the work, allowing it to be quickly grasped by the handle of gentle irony or broad pun.

By rendering the face of a pig in precious materials, Bischoff elevates his comic quip on the two geniuses, Einstein and Weber, to the level of fine art. In a similar fashion, another brooch, *Pomme de Terre–Pathétique Tragique* (2002), depicts a lowly potato laid even lower—that is, made both pathetic and tragic—by the small deposit of mouse scat on top. Again, a scatological subject is raised to eschatological considerations through the use of gold and coral. "It's like a small poem," Bischoff says.

By working in precious materials, he believes, he forces the viewer to take the imagery seriously. "In the past I worked in nonprecious materials," Bischoff says. "But one must give the highest values to the lowest thinking." He offers



Spanish Chimera (ring), 2001
fine gold
2 1/4 x 1 1/4 x 1"
Courtesy Gallery Stühler, Berlin

the 2001 ring *Maximus* as an example. The figure is a long-eared rabbit, not altogether unlike the Playboy logo. "If I make this rabbit in silver, it gets sold as street jewelry," he says. "But I am interested in what the two ears say." What they say, with the aid of the exhibition mount and the small bit of explanatory text, is that the fork suggests two ways for a creator to act — on blind faith in an external power or on a trust in desire. There's little question which Bischoff chooses.

"I give my own answer, my interpretation, my personal philosophy. The form is jewelry."

Bischoff does not purport to be a font of original ideas. "I'm not a big inventor," he says. "I'm not interested in laying tracks behind in the world. I follow the tracks that were there. I give my own answer, my interpretation, my personal philosophy. The form is jewelry."

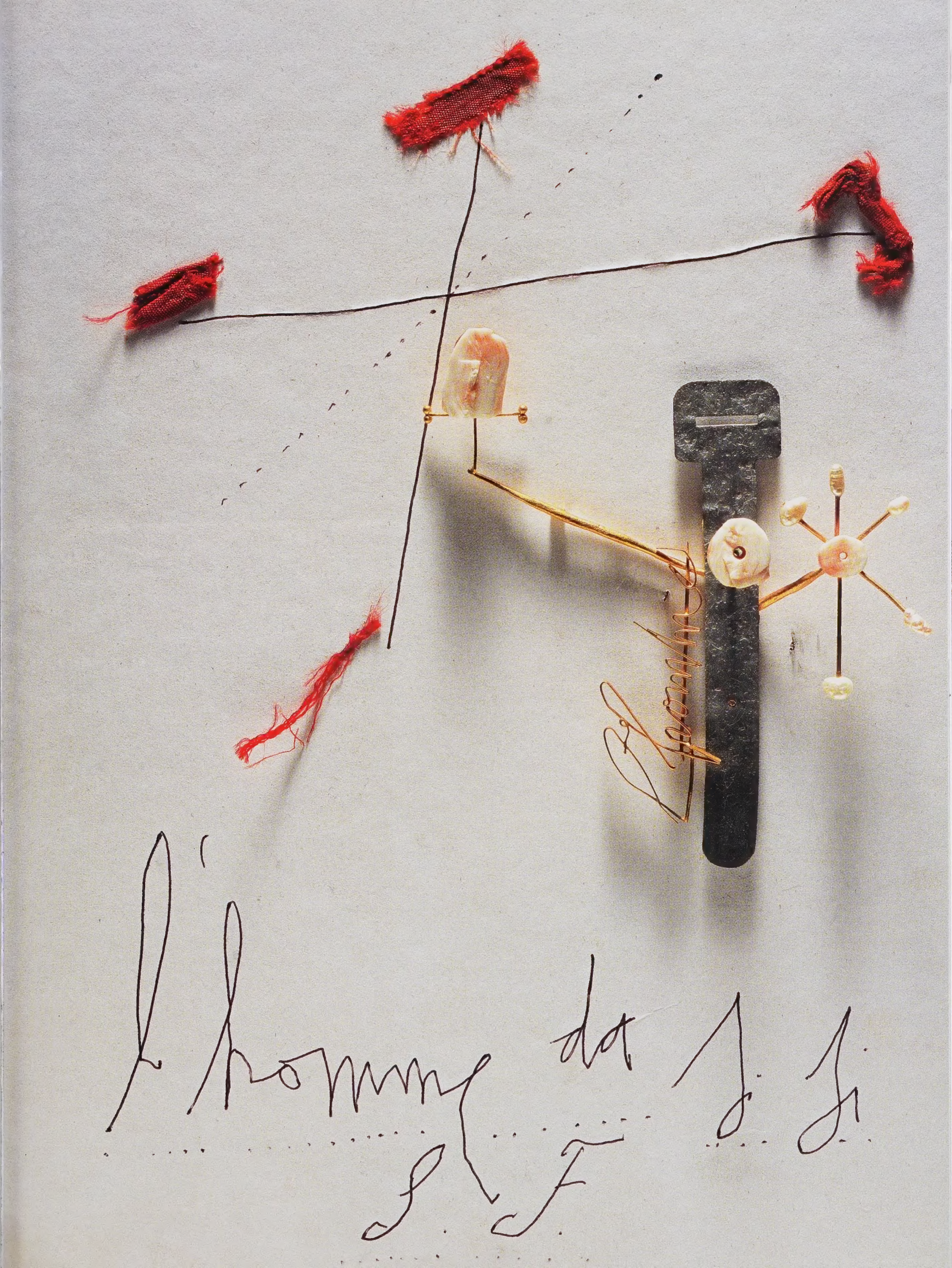
When Bischoff says he is "creating language," he means it. But his language consists of a vocabulary of shapes, a grammar of gold and coral. His 1999 brooch *Baghdad Sub Rosa* illustrates the potential depth of expression. At face value, it shows two golden pigs speaking with each other on a wall. The wall, which is made of coral, is missing a block, as if it had been damaged in war. The pigs, we know, are speaking in confidence (i.e., *sub rosa*). But they are accompanied by a pair of disembodied ears — they are, in effect, overheard. No confidence remains a secret. Title and image tell us enough to absorb the piquancy of the moment. The coral wall was originally part of a piece that Bischoff made about Antigone, who gave her brother a decent burial in defiance of the king's order, and then committed suicide. We do not need to know that, but it makes the work even more poignant by recalling age-old reenactments of loyalty, honor, pride, power—and betrayal.

Not every piece Bischoff makes is weighted with such dark emotions. Sometimes he simply indulges in a delight with form. He is particularly fond of the cluster, the pinwheel, the gathering of forms at a central locus. "I like the cluster," he explains, "because it always focuses on something." One of the most successful (and misunderstood) examples in the exhibition was the 2001 ring *Spanish Chimera*. The ring refers to one of Picasso's images, an inkblot silhouette of Don Quixote, which over-reproduction has reduced to the level of kitsch. But Bischoff gives Cervantes new life by finding a visual language that describes both donkey and windmill in a single spin of forms. Hence Sancho Panza's donkey becomes the giant windmill which becomes the donkey ... and so on. Or, as Bischoff captures it succinctly, "chimera."

Very little goes to waste in Bischoff's gestures in gold. As he says, "Coming from language, I have no ornament." His aesthetic asceticism perhaps explains his admiration of St. Francis of Assisi, represented in the exhibition by a 1997 brooch titled in Italian *L'homme da Si Si*. Unusual among Bischoff's recent works, the brooch unites coral, pearls, and fine gold with a plain piece of iron or base metal—a found object—as the axis. The pearls, signifying glory, and the coral, signifying sensuality, are on arms, held away from the body — both literally at arm's length from the man. And the joke? In colloquial Italian, "si" means "yes," but "si si" means "no." A complete ascetic, St. Francis was quite literally the "man of no." ⧗

L'Homme da Si Si (brooch), 1998
fine gold, coral, found object
4 3/4 x 4 x 1/4"
Collection Dr. Karl Bollman, Vienna

Critics **Patricia Harris** and **David Lyon** live in Cambridge, Massachusetts.


l'homme de J. J.
S. F.

Minnesota Fats, 1971
sterling silver, gold, cultured pearl, magazine photo, plexiglass
3 x 6 1/2"
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, The Helen W. Drutt Collection
Photo: Lynn Thompson

This article has been funded by Helen W. Drutt English in support of research that will expand historical documentation in our field, and in appreciation for the recognition bestowed upon her in receiving the 2000 Honorary Member Award from the Society of North American Goldsmiths.

Heart and Head

The Life and Work of Don Tompkins

by Ben Mitchell

In 1954, Don Tompkins, a twenty-one-year-old student of the influential Northwest artist-teacher Russell Day, entered three pieces of jewelry in the second annual Northwest Craftsmen's Exhibition at the University of Washington's Henry Gallery in Seattle. It was the first juried exhibition he had ever entered, and his first jewelry. He won a special award, and one of his works was reproduced on the cover of the exhibition catalogue.

Don Tompkins and Russell Day, 1957

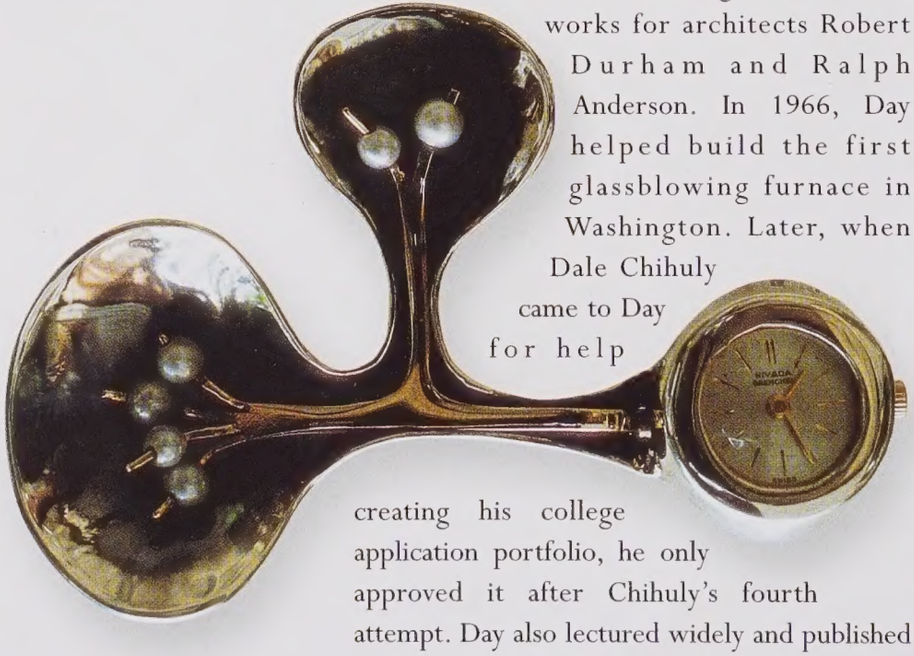
Tompkins was born in 1933 in Everett, Washington. His parents were lifelong teachers, mainly in small rural western schools. The Pacific Northwest has long been a fertile center for the crafts, but only relatively recently has the importance of Don Tompkins in this history been acknowledged.[1] And his story cannot be told without bringing in a reminder of Russell Day's significance in this history. Tompkins was his student at Everett High School. In 1953 Tompkins married Marilyn Hopkins (now Whyte); in 1954 and '55, he continued his studies with Day, taking drawing, painting, and design, and was his student assistant at Everett Junior Community College after Day took a position in the art department there. "Don was so interested in the jewelry that I was making that I gave him a set of tools, some silver and other materials," Day remembers.

For several months, on his own, Tompkins "tried to come up with something, but it all flopped, so he just gave it up, discouraged," says Day.[2] But sometime during the next year, Tompkins raided his mother's kitchen drawer for some spoons and, using his father's blowtorch, his mother's flatiron for an anvil—that would be solid iron, folks, nothing like the iron you'd buy today—and other odds and

Pendant, 1954
brass and silver
Collection of Maryn Tompkins

ends that struck his fancy, including bottle caps and broken glass, made some beautiful jewelry. Those were the works that ended up in the Northwest Craftsmen's show. He made all three in a single weekend, completely ignoring the specialized tools Day had given him. Out of this beginning Tompkins would go on to create a small but, in the history of 20th-century American craft, significant body of work.

Russell Day had studied with Ruth Penington at the University of Washington in the 1940s. Not only was he Don Tompkins's first art teacher; four years later he was painter Chuck Close's teacher for two years at Everett Junior College.[3] Day was also pretty much the first artist in the region to, in his humble words, "piddle around with glass." In 1956, while a graduate student at the University of Washington, Day was the first student to have a one-person show at the university's Henry Gallery, a glass show that created quite a stir. He worked mainly with flat glass and concrete casting, influencing the architect John Detlie and creating commissioned works for architects Robert Durham and Ralph Anderson. In 1966, Day helped build the first glassblowing furnace in Washington. Later, when Dale Chihuly came to Day for help creating his college application portfolio, he only approved it after Chihuly's fourth attempt. Day also lectured widely and published articles on teaching and art. Day was a brilliant teacher, a serious artist, and a pivotal influence and force on the Pacific Northwest's postwar crafts community.



Watch Brooch, ca. late 1950s
sterling silver, gold, cultured pearls

In 1954 Tompkins transferred from Everett Junior College to the University of Washington to study with Penington, like Day had before him. Penington is central to the history of Northwest craft and metalsmithing; Day says, "Almost anybody who was working in metal in the region studied with or was influenced by Penington. She was a great teacher because she believed in a minimum of tools, giving students the chance to be more inventive." In 1956, Tompkins received his BA in art education and, staying on, in 1958 earned his MFA in design, specializing in metal, jewelry, and sculpture. With his degrees in hand, Tompkins then went back to Everett Junior College and joined Day in the art department, where they taught together for five years.

Working at home with only the most primitive of tools, Tompkins forged out the brass with a hammer, fashioning a slightly concave, seductively feminine vulvalike form.

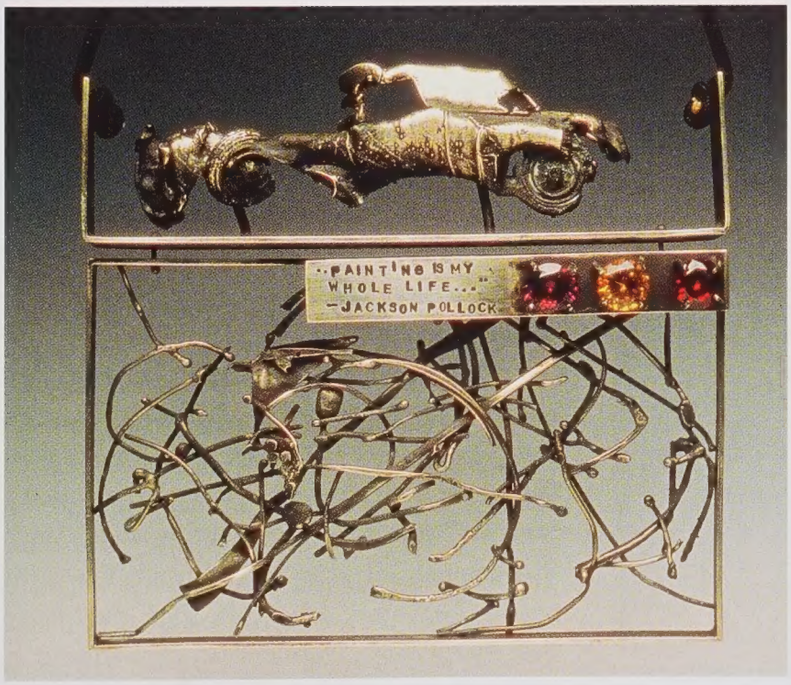
But let's revisit the 1954 Northwest Craftsmen's Exhibition. Two of the three works Tompkins entered are pendants, the third a gold ring. All three works are brashly well accomplished for so young an artist. One of the pendants, fabricated of brass and silver, is especially strong. Though it echoes to a small degree the dominant Modernist aesthetic of the time (what metalsmith Ken Cory later dismissively called "snot jewelry"),[4] it nonetheless possesses an authentic voice. Working at home with only the most primitive of tools, Tompkins forged out the brass with a hammer, fashioning a slightly concave, seductively feminine vulvalike form. A silver chevron is soldered at the bottom—or perhaps welded with his dad's home welder. Vaguely figurative, the piece is totemic, with a visceral, atmospheric presence. More than jewelry, it is a charm, a talisman.

In 1959, Day's essay, "An Approach to Jewelry Design," appeared in *Design Quarterly*, offering a brief but insightful inquiry into creativity and aesthetics, especially in Tompkins's work. Day wrote, "Don Tompkins has never been handicapped in anything he attempts to do for lack of a piece of equipment, materials, or a place in which to work....In the development of [his] sensitivity to form, there has been no edict handed down from some superior being. It has evolved from the process of seeing; of seeing enough until there is recognition."[5] Tompkins would later quote Pennsylvania sculptor Wharton Esherick, who wrote, "I use any damn machinery I can get hold of. Handcrafted has nothing to do with it. I'll use my teeth if I have to. There's a little of the hand, but the main thing is the heart and the head."[6] Tompkins went on to win awards in the 1955 and 1956 Northwest Craftsmen's Exhibitions, was a juror in 1957, and won awards again in 1958, 1962, and 1963. He also showed extensively in the Pacific Northwest Arts and Crafts Fairs, held in Bellevue, in 1954, '55, '57, and '62. "He had an amazing capacity for doing something in the flash of the moment. He was unafraid of ideas, of attempting anything," Day says. Right from the beginning.

Pendant, ca. 1965
sterling silver, semi-precious stones, coin
2 3/4 x 2 1/2 x 3/8"
Collection Marilyn Whyte

Marilyn Whyte tells an insightful story from this time: "Don was a very inventive and creative person. We saw some ancient pieces of jewelry that had tiny beads of gold fused to gold objects, and Don decided to learn how to do this process himself. We discovered it was a lost art and no one knew how it was done. We spent hours and hours researching and experimenting with silver until he was able to do it."

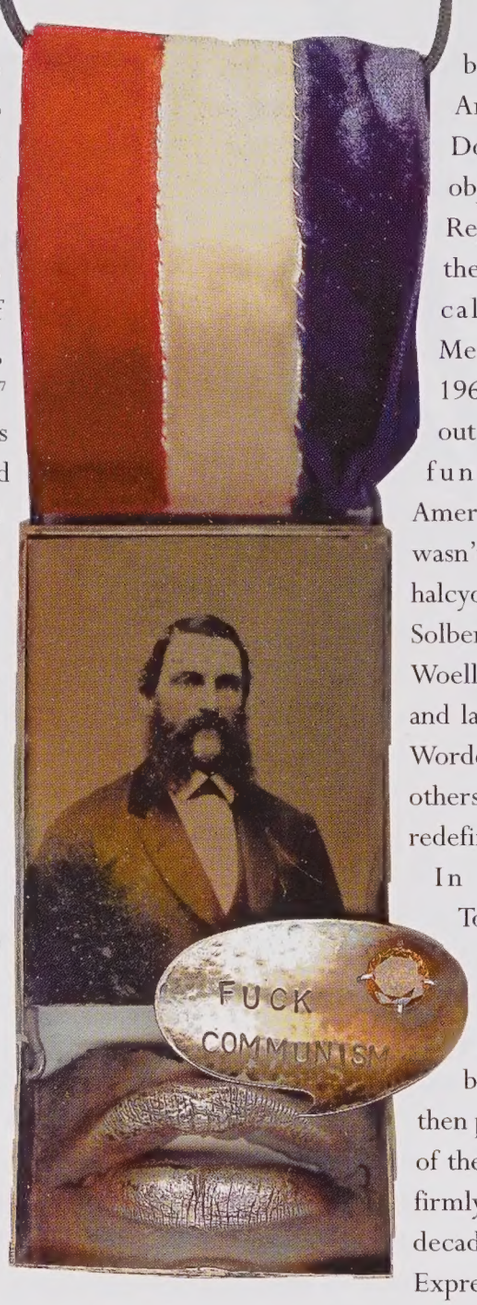
Don Tompkins's early works are charged with innovation, unbridled creativity, elegance, and often sublime beauty. Several bracelet watches and a brooch watch from the late 1950s are utterly unique for the time. He carved a set of eyeglass frames for himself out of a single block of aluminum. Many of the rings he made were kinetic and incorporated movable parts that made for surprise and delight, like a dog ring with tiny knobs on the dog's collar—when you squeeze them, the dog's mouth opens, revealing an exquisite set of handcarved ivory teeth. Merrily Tompkins, Don Tompkins's younger sister and a prominent Northwest artist



Jackson Pollack, 1972
sterling silver, brass, copper, semi-precious stones
4 3/4 x 5"
Private Collection

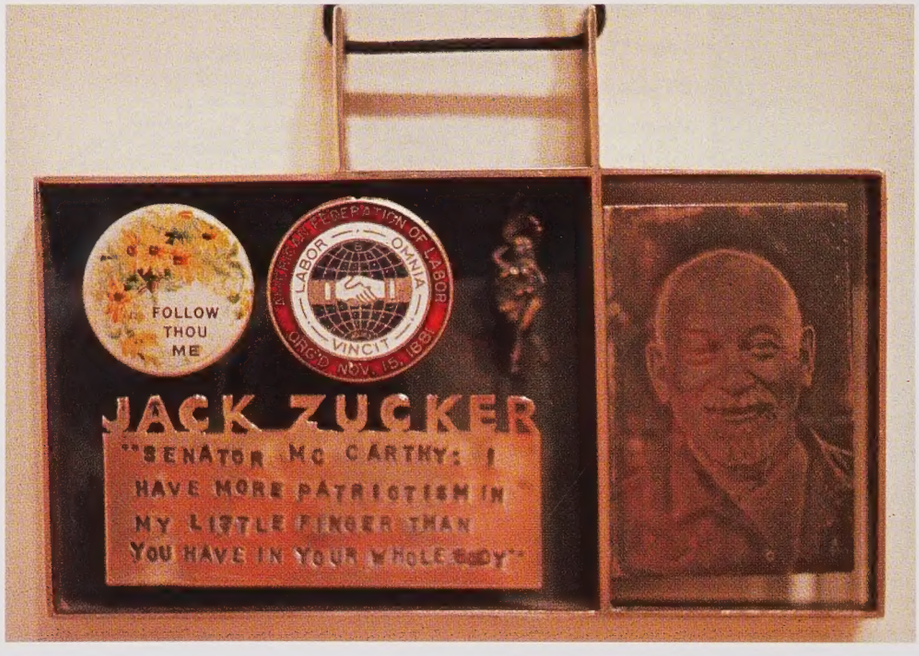
in her own right, says of the ring, "I know of nobody who has been able to look at it and not laugh out loud." Many of his works also incorporated the results of his experiments with the lost-wax casting of crumpled paper, Saran Wrap, and other eccentric materials.[7] From very early on Tompkins brought to his jewelry found objects, nontraditional materials, experimental techniques, and his wild and fertile native creativity.

One work from this time also sets the stage for what would later emerge as Tompkins's most important contribution to American metalsmithing. A slide of the work is labeled (in Tompkins's hand), "Pendant, ca. 1965." Marilyn Whyte, who luckily still has the piece, says of it, "It's probably one of the first medallion pieces. No theme to this one like his later pieces. He cast one of [his son] Paul's toy Indians, wax paper, etched lettering from newspaper somehow, added a couple of stones, a Canadian penny, and pearls." Day says, "People like Ramona [Solberg], Ken Cory, and Bob Winston have been given credit for what was the beginning of Pop Art in American jewelry. It was Don that brought the found object to American jewelry." Regardless of who's on first, the series Tompkins later called "Commemorative Medals," produced between 1965 and 1976, helped stake out new ground for work that fundamentally changed American jewelry making. He wasn't alone of course; it was a halcyon time, as first Ramona Solberg, Bob Winston, J. Fred Woell, Ken Cory, Lane Coulter, and later Kiff Slemmons, Nancy Worden, Merrily Tompkins, and others, each in their own way, redefined the field.



Patriotic (Fuck Communism), ca. 1969
sterling silver, tintype, semi-precious stone
8 x 3"
Collection Betty Tompkins

In the 1964 pendant, Tompkins sets up a grid and then *riffs* on the form, like a jazz improvisation, a Beat poetry reading. By breaking the grid apart and then putting it back together out of the broken pieces—a gesture firmly established in painting a decade earlier by the Abstract Expressionists—and through the seemingly spontaneous incorporation of unrelated objects, Tompkins invents a form that he would explore for the next decade. This first pendant is a tableau, the inscrutable parts of a short story, a fable, a private mythology. A world. In this work, and more fully in the mature series that soon followed, Tompkins crashes the party of American Modernist jewelry, bringing eccentric materials and new techniques, social and political satire, the detritus of popular culture, private histories, bawdy good humor, and just plain good fun to the workbench.



Jack Zucker, 1972
sterling silver, found objects, photo-etching
Collection the Zucker Family

In 1963, while he was traveling in Egypt, Day received a letter from Tompkins with the news that he and their colleague, the painter Larry Bakke, had both received teaching fellowships to Syracuse University for graduate study. Later that summer, Tompkins and his family moved to upstate New York. That fall, Don met Betty Beitscher, a native Philadelphian and a student in

one of his classes. Romance ensued, breaking up his marriage with Marilyn, who returned to Washington with their kids. It was while Tompkins was teaching and studying at Syracuse that he first began spending time in New York City, with Betty. He loved the city, and it left an enduring mark on his life and art. Merrily Tompkins says, "He loved Henry Miller. New York City. Pop Art. He loved the energy and the lopsided, balls-out soul of the city."

In 1966, Don and Betty married and spent the summer in Philadelphia. Tossing about for work, he approached Wesley Emmons, a jeweler with a successful commercial operation, who hired him to buff and do repair work. He was terrible at it. It's not hard to imagine how a brilliant and wildly inventive craftsman like Tompkins would feel as a repairman and production line drone. Frustrated, Emmons told him that in the back there was a bunch of cast-metal charms and other junk, and that he should "just do something with the stuff so that I can justify paying you," as Betty Tompkins remembers. That was the moment when, taking his own cue from the pendant of a year earlier, Tompkins began the work that would soon become the "Commemorative Medals" series. A few of the first pieces he made in Philadelphia that summer—works not yet visually or narratively linked to specific individuals or themes—became popular pieces in Emmons's line.[8] The medals that followed that summer's experimentation at Emmons's shop are wholly unique—at turns deeply, sweetly personal, and bitingly satiric and culturally savvy—in a way that was inseparable both from Tompkins's riotous creative personality and from the times in which they took shape.

Before going down to Philadelphia that summer, Tompkins had received a call from Ramona Solberg, who was teaching jewelry in Ellensburg, Washington, inviting him to join the faculty and teach jewelry and metalsmithing.[9] Central Washington College is in the heart of the dry, dusty, largely empty ranching country in the Kittitas Valley. Solberg first met Tompkins when he was Day's student assistant and had seen his work over the years. She says, "I knew that he was a jeweler and I knew that [he] was good. And I thought he was exactly what we needed over there. But it was thanks really to Russell Day that I knew about Don." That fall Don and Betty arrived in Ellensburg. Betty hated it on sight—central Washington is a long way, culturally and socially, from the East Coast—but they would stay on for six years, with Don teaching design, jewelry, and metalsmithing.

The years Tompkins and Solberg taught together were fruitful for them both. Solberg remembers, "Don influenced what I was using in my jewelry perhaps more than anyone.... It kind of loosened me up."[10] The two collaborated on the design of the jewelry studio for Central Washington's new art building, but before she had a chance to use it, Solberg returned to Seattle in 1969 to teach at the University of Washington. She says, "Don and I had a very nice relationship. We had a wonderful time. [He] was a very popular teacher and influenced many people over there."[11] About craft, photographer and colleague Jim Salstrand remembers Tompkins saying, "As long as you understand your tools, you can make anything." Merrily Tompkins nails it down this way: "He was a great teacher. Loved teaching, loved his students, and they loved him. He was always available to them; he had students hanging around his place all the time, eating barbecue, drinking beer. In addition to top-notch jewelry technique instruction and guidance through the creative process, his students were also constantly exposed to philosophical ideas. . . and intellectual discussion of anything under the sun."

...at turns deeply, sweetly personal, and bitingly satiric and culturally savvy—in a way that was inseparable both from Tompkins's riotous creative personality and from the times in which they took shape.

Teaching is the enduring connective tissue in Tompkins's life. After receiving his BA in art education from the University of Washington, he entered Syracuse's graduate program in education before leaving to take the Ellensburg position. Three years before he and Betty left Ellensburg, in 1972, Tompkins began the coursework for his doctorate in education at Columbia University's Teachers College, in New York City, one of the most influential and respected education schools in the country. He clearly put his teaching first—he was the son of teachers, after all—one of the reasons that he left such a small body of work behind. According

Banting and Best, 1969-72
sterling silver, brass, found objects, photo-etching (glass insulin syringe, insulin and top from insulin bottle)
4 x 5 x 5/8"
Collection Betty Tompkins
Photo: Lynn Thompson

opposite page
Janis Joplin, 1971
sterling silver, brass, cultured pearl, photo-etching
Private Collection
Photo: Lynn Thompson

to Betty Tompkins, "He really only made jewelry so that he could keep his teaching job or get a new one."

While studying at Teachers College, Tompkins was especially close to his philosophy professor, Maxine Green. Sometime in 1972, William J. Mahoney, chair of the art education department, Green, and others at Teachers College recommended him for a position with the art department at New York University. Because Betty wanted to return to New York so badly—and Don loved the city so—he accepted the position, stepping back down a rank to assistant professor. He and Betty returned to New York, bought a loft on Spring Street and settled in.

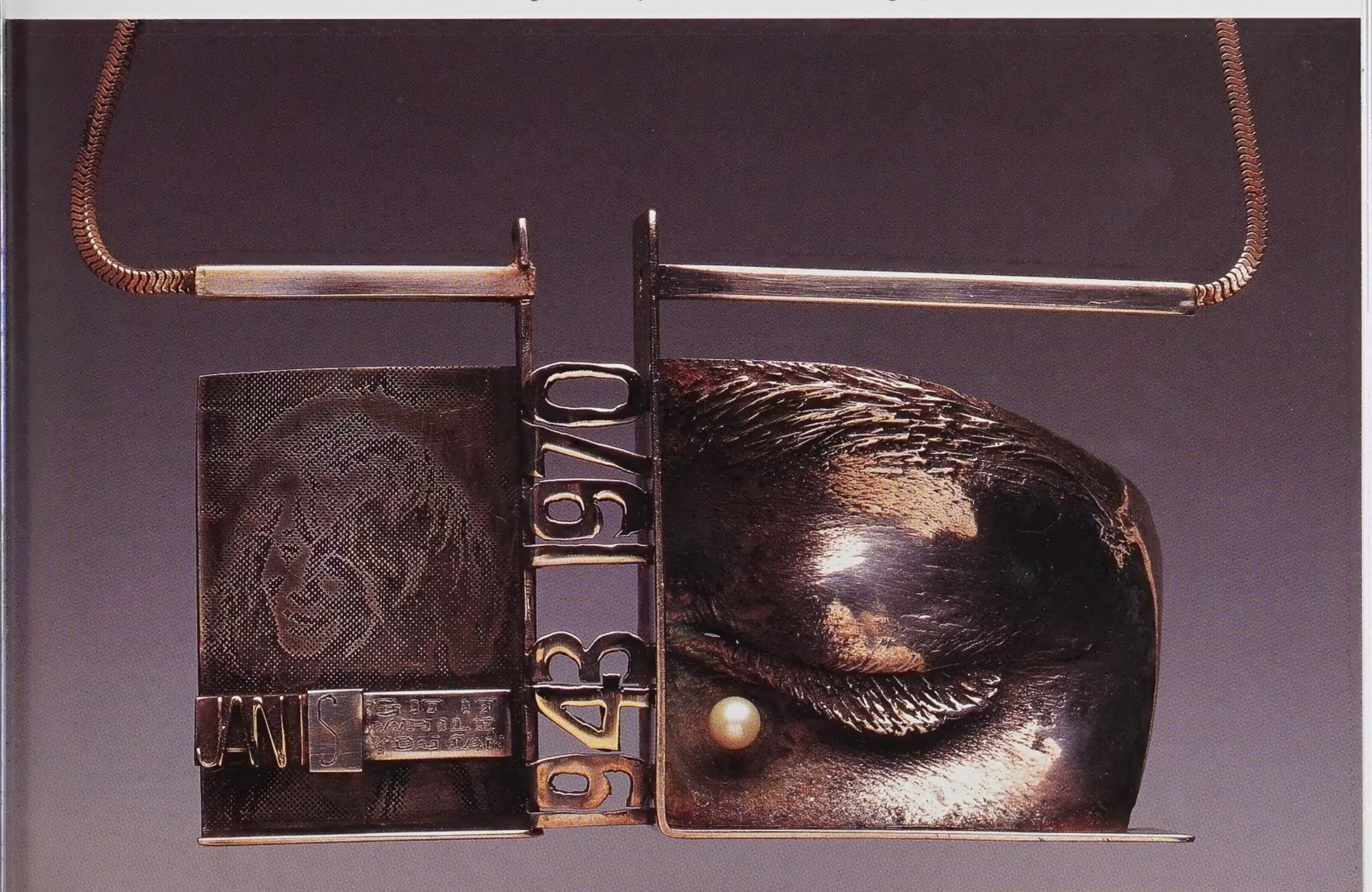
Throughout the 1960s and '70s, Tompkins worked and showed regularly. The Fairtree Gallery in New York included his work in "Contemporary American Silversmiths and Goldsmiths," a 1972 show that traveled to the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. His *Banting and Best* commemorative medal was selected for the 1973–74 Museum of Contemporary Crafts "Portable World" exhibition by the museum's director, Paul J. Smith. He showed at the Washington State Capital in Olympia, at New York University, in the Ruth Penington Invitational mounted to honor Penington by the Henry Gallery, and in many other venues in the Northwest and on the East Coast. He also mounted two exhibitions at the Teachers College Gallery: "Jewelry and Other Old Stuff," in October 1970, and "The Late Late Show," in January of 1972.[12] The 1970 show included more than 30 works from 1954 through 1986, ranging from early jewelry, carved wooden bowls, a set of bongo drums, and a five-string banjo[13] to several watches and, most significantly, seven medals. Of the medals he lists one simply as *Medal*, from 1966 (perhaps the prototype he marked as ca. 1965?), another as *Commemorative Medal*, also 1966; the others are his first medals dedicated to specific artists he respected: *Miller* (1967), *Hoffman, Oldenburg, Mailer*, and *Picasso*, all 1968. No exhibition checklist exists for the 1972 show, but the announcement reads: Don Tompkins presents: *The Late Late Show starring Martha Mitchell, Minnesota Fats & introducing Jack Zucker Commemorative Medals.*

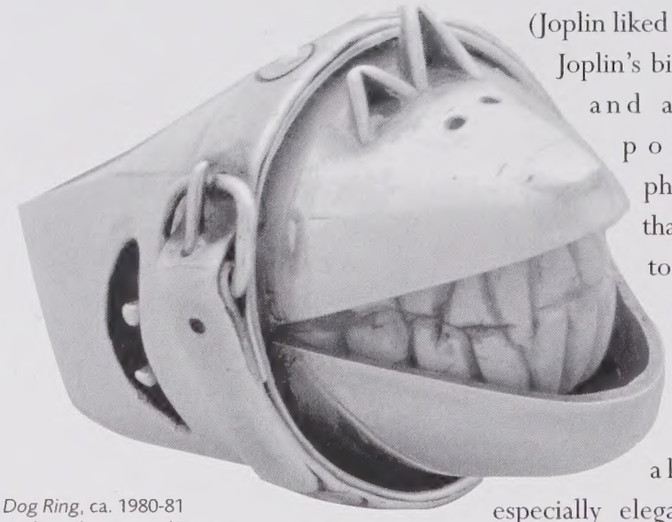
Including the first medal-like pendant, there is a record (likely still incomplete) of 25 commemorative medals.[14] Naturally, some are clearly richer, more cohesive and visually dynamic than others, such as *Henry Miller* (1968); *Patriotic (Fuck Communism)* (ca. 1969); *Nixon* (1969–72); *Janis Joplin, Minnesota Fats, Martha Mitchell* and *Jack Zucker* (all 1971, quite a run); *Jackson Pollock* (1972); what must be considered his masterwork, *Banting and Best* (1972); and *Ivan Karp* (1974). These medals possess the visual grace that Tompkins brought to his earlier traditional jewelry, together with biting parody, balls-to-the-wall social commentary, often a full-blown wit and at turns a tender, personal touch.

Jack Zucker (ca. 1972) is one of the gems and comes out of a terrific story. Zucker, a Philadelphia union organizer, was a friend of Betty Tompkins's parents. Along with so many intellectuals of the 1950s, he was called up before Senator Joseph McCarthy's specious Un-American Activities Committee and asked to defend himself. He said, "Senator McCarthy, I have more patriotism in my little finger than you have in your whole body." Tompkins commemorates those words in the work, along with an etched portrait of Zucker, an American Federation of Labor pin, and a kitschy cast charm of a dancing girl, all wonderfully balanced in the grid format. A terrific tribute.

The medals represent a kind of autobiography: oddball, hard-living, and unique American icons like *Minnesota Fats* and *Janis Joplin*, whom Tompkins just loved; the pop/political constructions like *Patriotic* and *Martha Mitchell* (the wife of John Mitchell, Nixon's attorney general and mastermind of Watergate); and of course the whole constellation of fellow artists he so admired. A review of Fairtree Gallery's 1973 show in *Craft Horizons* says, "Most amusing was the satiric comment on Martha Mitchell, clearly stating the case with castings in silver, from telephone, gabbing mouth to toilet bowl."[15] *Janis Joplin* is especially lovely, incorporating a mold taken from a life cast of Betty Tompkins's closed eye and cast in silver, a single pearl tear

Martha Mitchell, 1972
sterling silver, brass, velvet, toy noisemaker
Whereabouts unknown





Dog Ring, ca. 1980-81
sterling silver, carved ivory
1 3/4 x 1 1/4 x 1 1/4"
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston,
The Helen W. Drutt Collection

(Joplin liked to be called "Pearl"), Joplin's birth and death dates, and a photo-etched portrait. The photographic etching that Tompkins brought to his jewelry is one of the medals' most unique and independent touches. The piece also features an especially elegant, finely designed and executed attachment to the cord, something unusual for the pendant form that he used throughout the medals series.[16] As the critic Matthew Kangas said in these pages in the fall of 1995, "These objects comprise an important body of work which satirizes American society in pendant-necklaces of great linear delicacy, impeccable composition, and withering wit."[17]

"Where most reach for a tool or material because they have been told it would work, Don reaches because in his mind he sees what will do the job. He seems to have the conviction nothing is impossible, nothing is inviolable. All he needs to do is find the key."

True enough, yet, like *Janis Joplin*, they could also be gentle, heartfelt celebrations or eulogies.

Banting and Best, in brass and silver, is unquestionably Tompkins's most important medal. Tompkins was diagnosed as a diabetic when he was nine: Banting and Best were the scientists who discovered and isolated the hormone insulin that saved his life.[18] Here he commemorates the date of the discovery, features delicately etched portraits of the two scientists, and adds an actual syringe filled with insulin. Nothing he did in the commemorative medals could be more deeply personal, more affecting.

In 1975, Tompkins was fired from NYU for a second time. He had been drinking heavily for years and had begun arriving to class drunk. After his first firing, his students petitioned the administration to reinstate him, and won. Nobody could help him the second time. "Don was a very passionate man, drawn to extremes," Merrily Tompkins says. "He had a real admiration for anyone who did their job lovingly . . . butchers, real estate agents, policemen, spacemen, scientists, waitresses. He was also kind of captivated by the seedy side of life. He found a certain sweetness and soulfulness in the underbelly of the underdog. I think it was partly (in addition to the liquor) that sort of appreciation of the human spirit prevailing that drew him to the bars. He was an alcoholic, chain-smokin', steak-eatin' guy." Drinking is of course suicidal for a diabetic, and he smoked heavily. His drinking also broke up his marriage. Betty Tompkins tells a tragically prescient anecdote: "When I first met Don, he told me that when he was twenty-one he drank a whole six-pack of beer one day and liked it so much that he decided that he was going to drink at least one a day for the rest of his life." After NYU, he tried setting up a business, The Jewelry Loft, in SoHo, but it failed. Defeated and depressed, he returned to the Northwest in 1975 and took a position teaching goldsmithing at the Northwest Technical School,[19] but clearly his heart wasn't in it. Russell Day says of this time, "He was just shot down. His whole spirit was gone. He took AA and quit drinking, but he just didn't come back from it."

Don Tompkins produced little work that we know of from 1976 until he died in 1982 of a heart attack—he was eight months shy of fifty. He was working, though perhaps fitfully, as the unfinished *Mouth* and other fragments of work were found in his shop after he died. Nonetheless, the works that he did leave us—the marvelous early jewelry, the essential *Commemorative Medals*—as well as the many students and artists whose lives he touched and whose aesthetics he helped form, are an essential legacy that has been too little known. Russell Day leaves us with perhaps the most lasting tribute. "Where most reach for a tool or material because they have been told it would work, Don reaches because in his mind he sees what will do the job. He seems to have the conviction nothing is impossible, nothing is inviolable. All he needs to do is find the key."[20] Don Tompkins's life and work—a courageous, boisterous, lusty, and creative life, and jewelry that comprises a lasting influence in American metalsmithing—are at once an example and a caution. We are all the richer for both. ⧗

Ben Mitchell is senior curator at the Yellowstone Art Museum, Billings, Montana, a 2003 Montana Committee for the Humanities Research Fellow, and author of *The Jewelry of Ken Cory: Play Disguised*.

Various elements for the unfinished *Mouth* that were on Don Tompkins bench upon his death, early 1980s
brass, silver, sterling silver, photo etchings, original negative
Collection Merrily Tompkins
Photo: Dan Tilden

[1] See especially Matthew Kangas, "Ellensburg Funky," *Metalsmith*, Fall 1995, in which he surveys the work of Don and Merrily Tompkins, Ken Cory, Nancy Worden, and Ed Wicklander; and Vicki Halper's very good *Findings: The Jewelry of Ramona Solberg* (Seattle, WA: Bank of America/University of Washington Press, 2001), 8–9.

[2] This quote from Russell Day, and many others from Marilyn Whyte, Merrily Tompkins, Betty Tompkins, and Jim Sahlstrand, come from extensive telephone interviews, email correspondence, and letters exchanged throughout the autumn and early winter of 2002. Several others not quoted here were enormously helpful, including Paul and Maryn Tompkins, Helen W. Drutt English, and Vicki Halper.

[3] Don Tompkins and Larry Bakke were also Close's teachers, as Tompkins had returned from graduate school and joined Day on the Everett faculty.

[4] See Ben Mitchell, *The Jewelry of Ken Cory: Play Disguised* (Tacoma, WA: Tacoma Art Museum; Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997).

[5] Russell Day, "An Approach to Jewelry Design," *Design Quarterly*, Number 45–46, 1959.

[6] Donald Paul Tompkins, *Crafts, the High Arts, and Education*. Dissertation for Doctor of Education degree, Columbia University Teachers College, New York, 1972.

[7] Bob Winston (b. 1915) is generally credited with pioneering lost-wax casting in American jewelry, first working with it in the 1940s when he taught at the California College of Arts and Crafts. See Lee Nordness, *Objects USA* (New York: Viking Press, 1970), 212. This book was important and influential in its time, as it recognized very early the revolution underway throughout the American crafts. Nonetheless, it is odd that Nordness included Winston, Ramona Solberg, J. Fred Woell, and Ken Cory, but not Tompkins.

[8] According to Betty Tompkins, at some point Emmons had one of his shop assistants try to imitate Tompkins's works, but she says, "They are junk, nothing like the unique works Don made. You can easily tell the difference between Don's and the copies. He was a better craftsman."

[9] Ramona Solberg, like Russell Day and Tompkins, studied with Ruth Penington and exerted an enormous influence on the Pacific Northwest's metalsmith community.

[10] Ramona Solberg, interview by Vicki Halper at the artist's home, March 23, 2001. Smithsonian *Archives of American Art*, 8–9.

[11] Solberg, 8.

[12] Both exhibitions were for "partial fulfillment of requirement of the EdD in College Teaching," as it reads on the show announcements.

[13] In 1960 Tompkins had received a scholarship for summer graduate study at the School for American Craftsmen in Rochester, New York, where he studied woodworking.

[14] Of the twenty-five commemorative medals included in my initial research, there are seven whose whereabouts are unknown: *John Wayne, Jack Zucker, Martha Mitchell, George Custer, Bicentennial, Porno Medal*, and *Tim Leary*. Please contact *Metalsmith* if you have any knowledge of these or other lost works.

[15] *Craft Horizons*, February 1973.

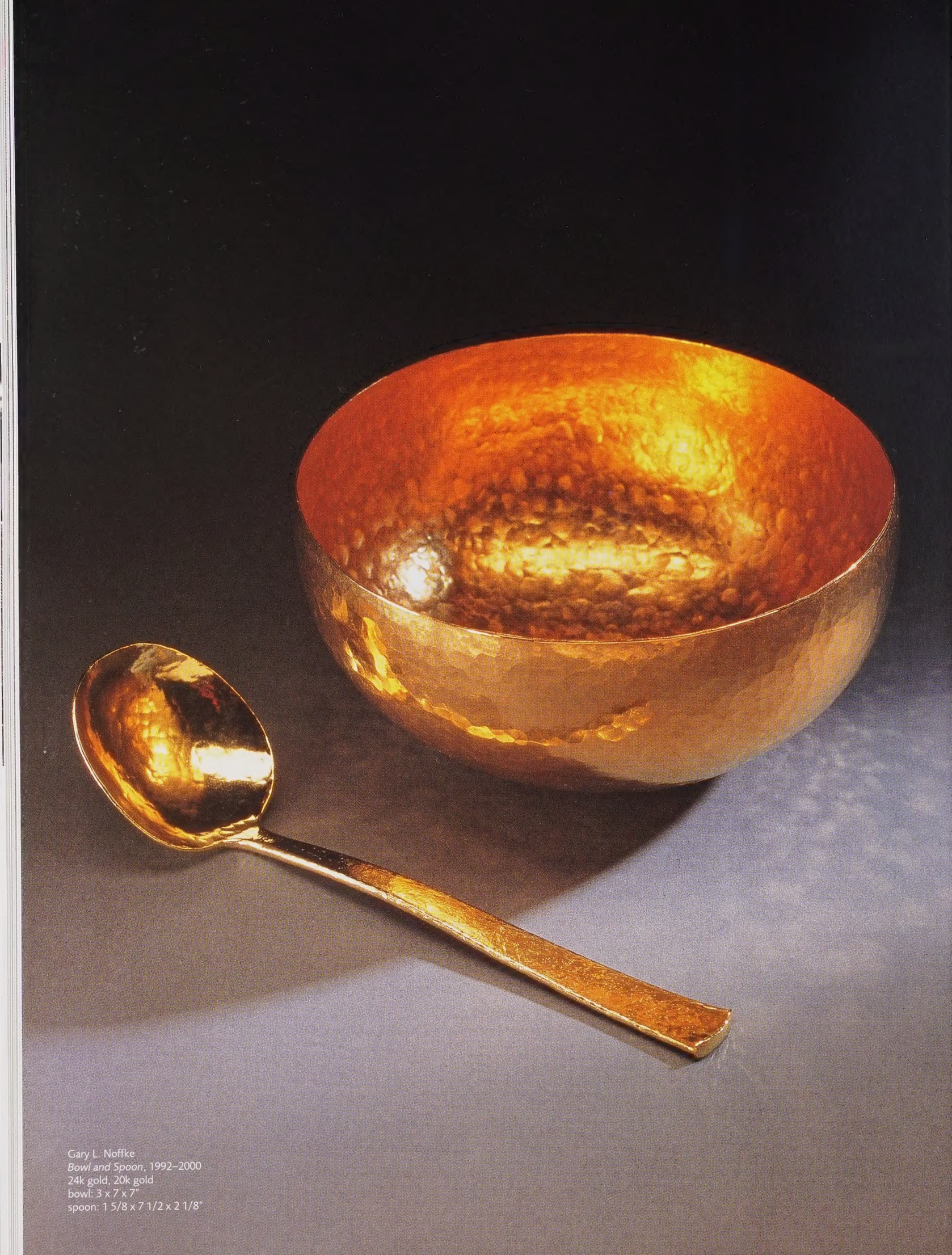
[16] As imaginatively and technically inventive as Tompkins's pendants were, his finishes were often slapdash. And yet, he was one of the earliest craftsmen to experiment with photo etching on jewelry. While studying at Teachers College he contacted Eastman Kodak directly for assistance with the process and struggled for months before he mastered it. The photo etchings enliven his medals series as much as the Pop Art embrace of the everyday and found objects.

[17] Kangas, 17.

[18] Merrily Tompkins recalls: "When [Don] was nine and learning to live with childhood diabetes, a doctor told him he would be lucky to live to be 50....That death sentence stuck with him his whole life. What a shitty thing to tell a little kid. I think that's why he lived the way he did. He loved that old song, "Live fast, love hard, die young, and leave a beautiful memory."

[19] On his résumé, Tompkins lists his last job as "Faculty Director, Northwest College of Goldsmithing, Seattle, Wash." There was no such place. Russell Day told me it was the Northwest Technical School; Merrily knew the place and didn't think much of it.

[20] Day, 5.



Gary L. Noffke
Bowl and Spoon, 1992–2000
24k gold, 20k gold
bowl: 3 x 7 x 7"
spoon: 1 5/8 x 7 1/2 x 2 1/8"

The Art of "The Art of Gold"

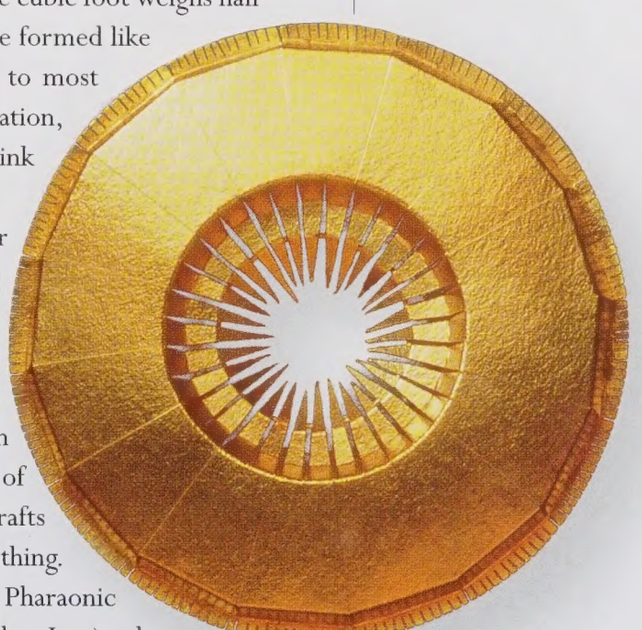
by Marjorie Simon

When Virgil wrote, "Auri sacra fames!" ("Cursed craving for gold!"), it's a good bet he wasn't thinking about creamy yellow metal that can be drawn to a fine wire or beaten to a flyaway sheet. From antiquity, gold has been freighted with mythology, with politics and economics, and not surprisingly with class, race, and gender.

Much of the writing about gold has focused on its value as currency and the lust it has engendered, from the treasures of Troy and Tutankhamun's tomb to the California gold rush. It goes without saying that this is not what attracts most goldsmiths. Gold is dense (one cubic foot weighs half a ton) and soft (long ago Indian smiths so purified gold that it could be formed like putty around gemstones without damaging them); it is impervious to most solutions, and though it may be discolored and scratched during fabrication, it polishes up to a warm glow, in a range of muted tones from pink to green.

"The Art of Gold," curated by Michael Monroe, is the first major survey of contemporary American goldsmithing. The traveling exhibition was organized by the Society of North American Goldsmiths and toured by Exhibits USA. Comprising 79 works from 76 artists, the exhibition has a preponderance of jewelry over objects and hollowware. Bruce Metcalf's excellent essay in the exhibition catalogue locates the studio jeweler in the major design movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, most notably the Arts and Crafts Movement, as well as assessing the current state of American goldsmithing.

It's hard to think of a civilization that has not appreciated gold: Pharaonic Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Fertile Crescent (site of modern-day Iraq), the Caucasus and Central Asia, Byzantium, West Africa, and, in the New World, Colombia, Peru, and Mexico.[1] Gold and goldsmithing were well documented in Egyptian painting and in contemporaneous Biblical narratives. As Moses directs the building of the tabernacle, he notes that Bezalel "cast four rings of gold."[2] He also notes that "they did beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into threads," drawplates being unknown at the time (circa 4000 BCE). Granulation is believed to

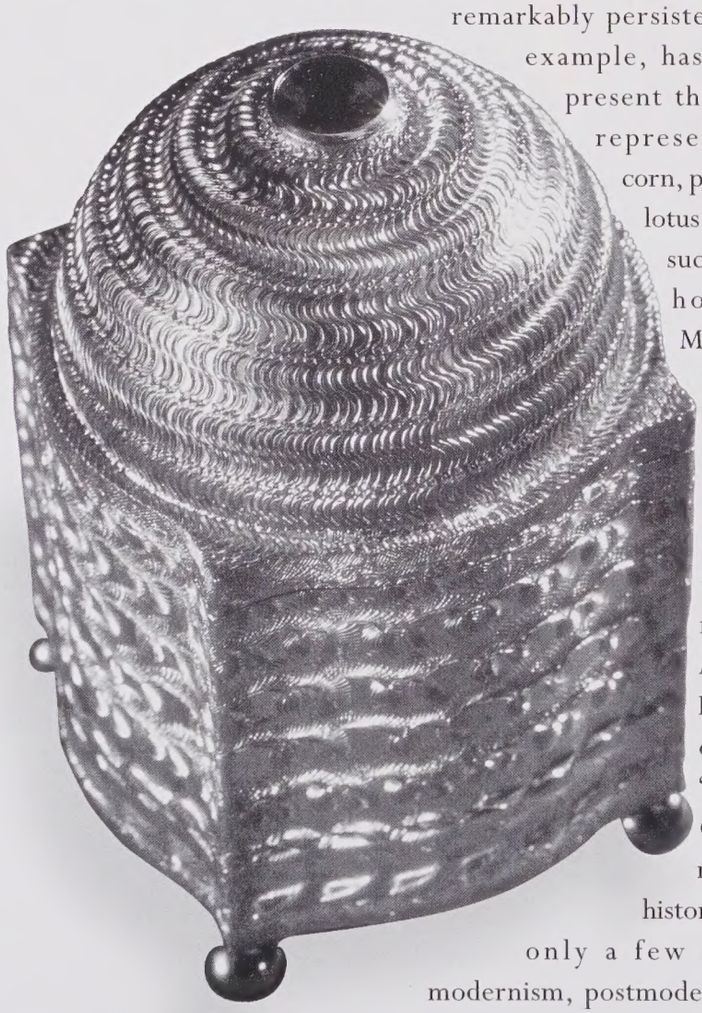


Lisa Gralnick
Brooch, 2001
18k gold
2 3/4 x 2 3/4 x 3/8"

date to the fourth millennium BCE, or the Twelfth Dynasty of Egypt,[3] and was later perfected by the Etruscans in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. "[U]sing the method of colloidal fusion welding, powdered copper carbonate, probably pulverized malachite, was mixed with a bonding agent such as fish glue."[4] Reintroduced in nineteenth-century Italy by Castellani, granules were still being applied with fish glue, although the results were said to be not quite as fine as those achieved by the Etruscans.[5] Treasures found in the royal tombs of Ur (now Iraq) about third millennium BCE (around the time of Abraham) reveal chasing and repousse, engraving, or incising of beaten sheet, and what might be considered "protogranulation," along with chains and strung beads.

The few pieces that showcase ancient techniques reveal the intrinsic satisfaction of handwork and its relation to technology.

Like other art styles, goldsmithing has evolved over millennia through cultural contact via migration and trade routes, wars and conquests, even the capture of prisoners and slaves. Yet techniques and formal language have been remarkably persistent. Nature, for example, has been an ever-present theme. Egyptians represented grains of corn, pomegranates, and lotus blossoms; "bees sucking a drop of honey" adorn a Minoan amulet from the sixteenth century BCE, and 3,000 years later, insects were still being represented in Art Nouveau.[6] Likewise, sources of inspiration in "The Art of Gold" range over much of recorded history, but there are only a few references to modernism, postmodernism or even post-postmodernism. There are, however, some evocations of jewelry's history, from Egypt to the Victorian Age, along with a few commentaries on the field and one metalsmith's valentine to smithing.

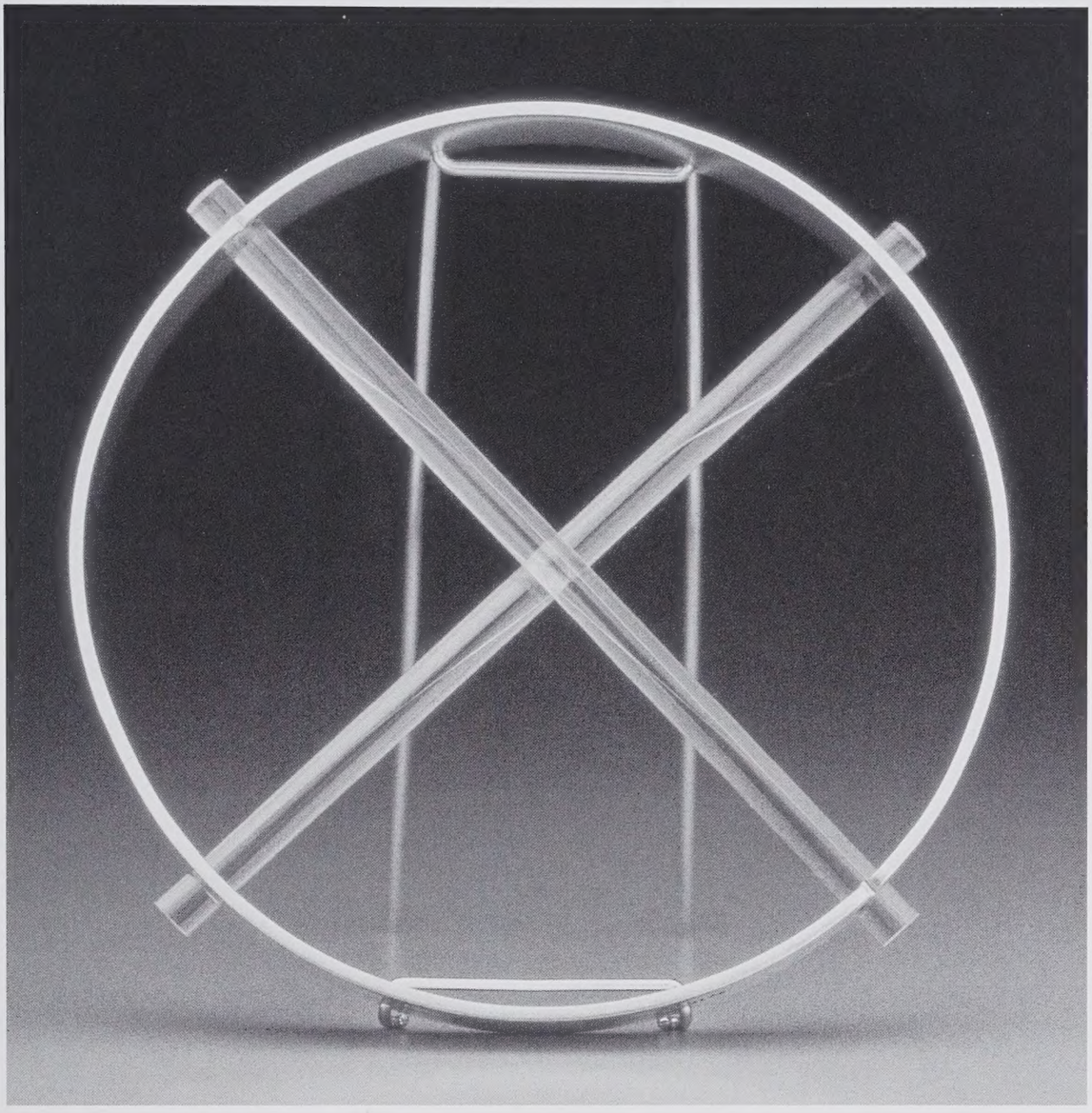


Christopher Hentz
Omnipotent Optimism, 2002
22k yellow gold, 18k yellow gold, 14k yellow gold, hematite, lapis lazuli
2 3/4 x 1 5/8 x 1 5/8"

Several of the works included were inspired by earlier art movements. Linda MacNeil's *Lotus* necklace commemorates classical Egyptian symmetry, while a bracelet by Myron Bikakis and Mark Johns recalls Hellenistic chainwork. Mary Preston's filigree brooch carries Victorian overtones and shows off the ductility of gold as seen in Asian filigree. Richard Mawdsley has built his own frieze (*Bricks and Columns*) out of densely packed tubing, in an apparent homage to the Greeks, from whom we have purloined so much visual language. Though Petra Class names her wirework pin after the jeweled garlands and ribbons popular during the reign of Marie Antoinette, the pin actually resembles a necklace in a fifteenth-century Flemish portrait of Maria Maddalena Baroncelli by Hans Memling.[7]

The few pieces that showcase ancient techniques reveal the intrinsic satisfaction of handwork and its relation to technology. In *Omnipotent Optimism* Christopher Hentz has chosen three different colors (karats) to show off the kind of *guilloche* engraving seen under enamel in Cartier's best works. Granulation continues to fascinate as a technique and an embellishment. Douglas Harling's intimate *Sea Saw* brooch is one excellent example, recalling Victorian scrollwork and the neo-classicism it represented, as well as Celtic knots and their reinterpretation in gold by commercial jewelry houses early in the twentieth century. But for bravura evocation, it's hard to beat Kent Raible's *Pregnant Chalice*. Fabergé might be turning over in his grave, but Raible has gone the master's egg one better, reinterpreting the biblical symbol of fertility and the ornate objects produced for acquisitive royalty in the last century. Although tastefully restrained, it's a jaw-dropping confection with gemstones, granulation, and complex fabrication.

Nature themes do seem impervious to the passage of time. John Iversen has long used Industrial Age electroforming to preserve leaf forms, and his giant spiky *Sycamore Pin* is a simple and graceful specimen in 18k gold. Sue Amendolara's standing object *Planting Roots*



Donald Friedlich
Translucence Series Brooch, 2001
18k gold, 14k gold, dichroic glass
2 1/4 x 2 1/4 x 5/16"

typifies her botanical and maternal themes, executed in a classical metalsmithing style with clean lines, tapering sprouts, and sleek pod. Tom Herman's virtuoso carved bracelet *A Tangle of Brambles*, of *shakudo* and 18k gold, and Jim Kelso's intimate *Chrysanthemum Lady Bug Brooch* effectively use color in mixed metals with representational flora. Herman's hinged bracelet with diamond clasp suggests the ornamental foliage of fin-de-siecle and early twentieth-century Europe as seen in the Arts and Crafts movement, while Kelso's work recalls the inlaid metalwork in Japanese swords. Perhaps the most inventive use of nature belongs to Jennifer Trask, whose brooch *Popillia Japonica* appears at first to be a serene symmetrical composition of muscular cabochons in an oval frame, arranged like carved gemstones in a Victorian brooch, themselves copies of Castellani's early nineteenth-century copies of Etruscan granulation and beading. Closer inspection reveals the cabochons to be the bodies of Japanese beetles, lending a new twist to mimicry in nature and elevating pestilence to art. The work also has a precedent in glass beetles made by Tiffany in the early twentieth century. In addition, it's one of the few examples of mixed media in the exhibition, representing the conflation of high and low that has characterized much jewelrymaking since the 1970s.

By the nineteenth century the arts, and jewelry, began to comment on themselves and to look back to gothic, neoclassical, rococo, and Renaissance styles. The twentieth century added Modernism, from which "art jewelry" evolved. Following the postwar generation came those who embraced the Modernist aesthetic (Thomas Gentille) as well as those who eschewed it (J. Fred Woell). A simple forged neckpiece by the late Ronald Hayes Pearson recalls those beginnings. Made only four years before Pearson's death in 1996, it reveals the consistency of his aesthetic. Modernism lives on in the constructivism of Abrasha, represented

Kathy Buszkiewicz
Omnia Vanitas II, 2001
18k yellow gold, pearl, U.S. currency
1 x 1 x 1 1/4"

Richard Mawdsley
Bricks and Columns, 1992
18k gold, lapis lazuli
2 3/8 x 3 1/8 x 3/8"
Courtesy Mobilia Gallery

here by a ring with rolling gemstone, and in the cool geometry of Donald Friedlich's brooches, here enlivened by his experiments with dichroic glass. Friedlich's designs are connected to minimalist sculpture more than to the human body; one imagines them blown up to wall size, with light and color playing on a larger field.

By contrast, Lisa Gralnick constructs intimate architectonic forms that retain the maker's touch. Gralnick's explorations into physics and structure have morphed into origami, treating the metal as if it were paper and creating a light but stable structure with a soft handworked finish. Gralnick appears once again to have embraced beauty, leaving behind the dark narratives of the past decade, while abandoning neither the thoughtful underpinnings of her material choices nor her enviable craftsmanship. Bruce Metcalf has likewise turned to lighter (but never lite) subject matter with *Two Doves in a Private Garden*, a smorgasbord of materials and techniques, and one of the few openly narrative pieces in the show. Lacking the prickliness of some of Metcalf's figures, it shows a love of making, while thinking about Victorian jewelry, nature, and the body.

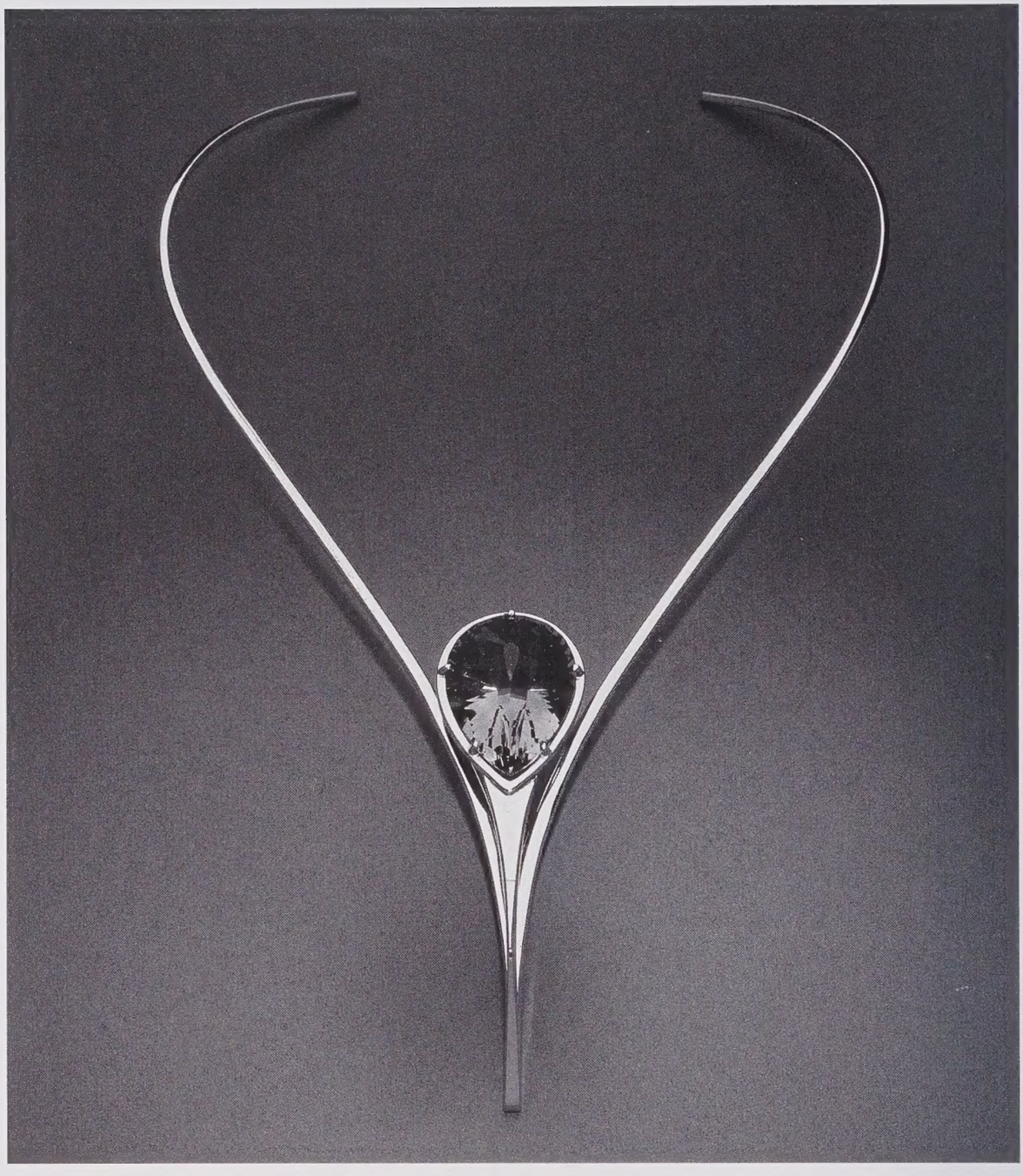
Thomas Hermans
A Tangle of Brambles, 2002
18k gold, shakudo, diamond
length 7 7/16 x 15/16 x 1/8"

What might be called commentaries on the field, or objects that are meant to make us think, are few. They are, if you will, messengers of postmodernism, in that the extra-visual narrative, or implied content, is more important than the formal structure. Susan Kingsley's *Priceless Charm Bracelet* is a good example. Like a conventional charm bracelet, it is a short chain hung with multiple charms. But the joke is that the charms are all shaped like jewelry price tags, with no prices listed. The "backstory" is as significant as the object, since the homogeneous shapes of the charms provide little variety on their own. On the other hand, Kathy Buszkiewicz is right on target with her continued exploration of values and our throwaway culture: she uses discarded U.S. currency as a graphic found object with a past. At first glance, the pattern of green and white resembles a marine animal more than the detritus of capitalism, as overlapping shards are assembled into a giant stone atop one ring. Buszkiewicz inadvertently honors the engravers whose skill makes the money graphic in the first place. Louis Mueller's witty gold picture hooks tweak the tired question of whether craft is art. Why not just hang the whole body on the wall, or bring the "real" art (i.e. paintings) to the body?

What might be called commentaries on the field, or objects that are meant to make us think, are few.

Douglas Harling
Sea Saw, 1999
22k gold, 14k gold, pin mechanism, freshwater pearls
1 3/8 x 2 1/4 x 1/2"

And finally, the valentine: Gary Noffke's bowl and spoon. A massive amount of gold has been raised to create a place setting of primitive implements, what might be unearthed at the site of a Cro-Magnon picnic. These objects completely inhabit their "vesselness" and their function, and Noffke directly honors goldsmithing by retaining the visible planishing marks and untrimmed edge. The pieces celebrate the sense of touch as well as sight in the golden glow that accompanies what is surely their



Ronald Hayes Pearson
Torque 18-142, 1993
14k yellow gold, amethyst
7 7/8 x 4 7/8 x 15/16"
Courtesy Carolyn A. Hecker

substantial weight. In these simple implements, Noffke has married history and materiality, and with it craft's traditional connection to function. They are all about process and all about the beginning of beauty.

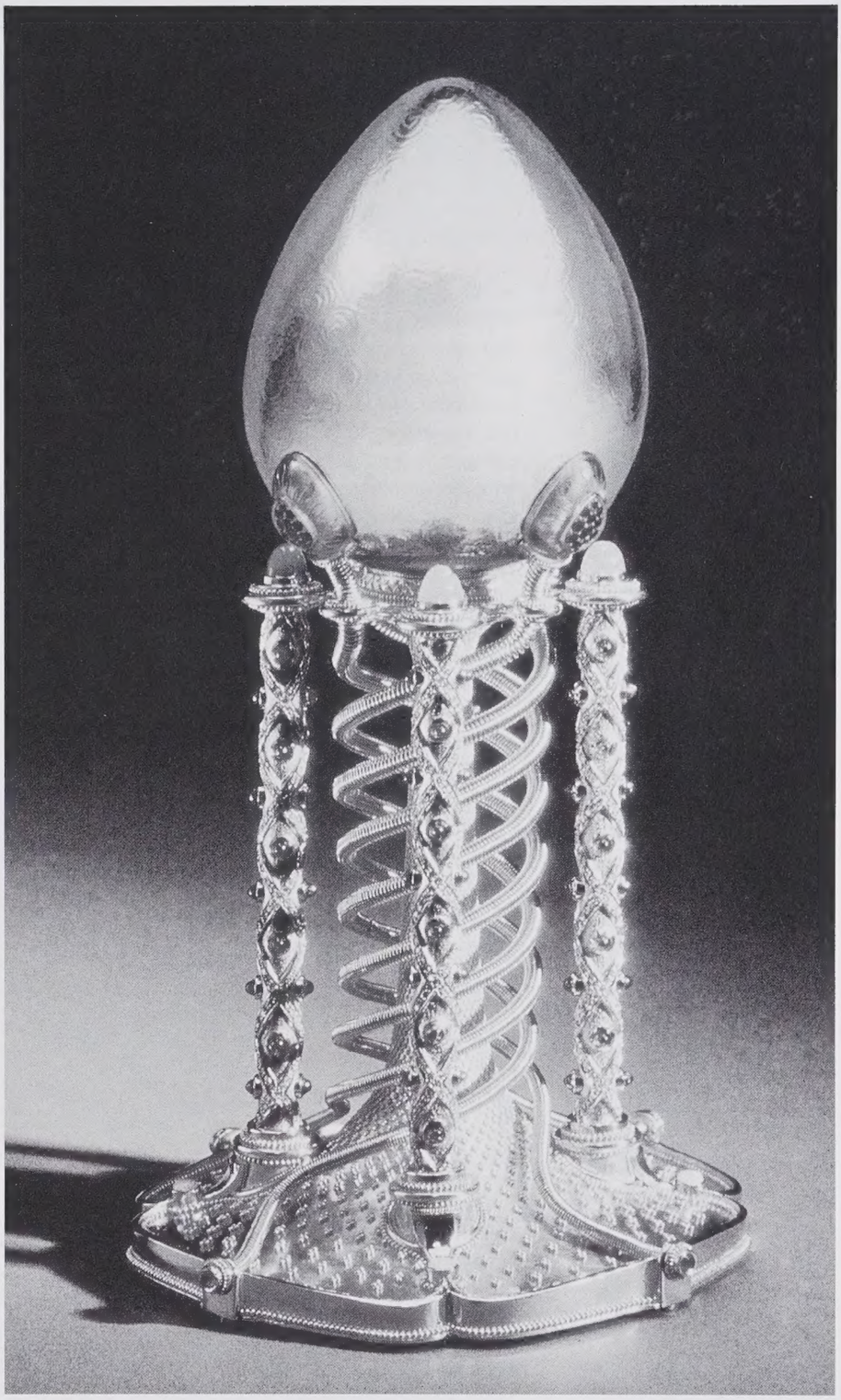
The United States is used to being the new kid, and its art has often functioned as a kind of cultural sponge, absorbing elements from disparate sources. That kind of greedy energy is missing, perhaps because gold seems so serious.

In an ideal world, what would we wish for in a survey of American gold? The United States is used to being the new kid, and its art has often functioned as a kind of cultural sponge, absorbing elements from disparate sources. That kind of greedy energy is missing, perhaps because gold seems so serious. This collection contains little that is radical, too few pieces that are thought-provoking, and a few that would be of little interest but for the gold. Make no mistake: there is some really beautiful jewelry and some first-class craftsmanship, including that of relative newcomer Namu Cho, whose Damascene pin unites the graphic patterns of Japanese prints with the skilled hands of the engraver. But the exhibition could use a spark, such as the irreverence that Hermann Jünger, Reinhold Reiling, and the succeeding generations of German students brought to postwar treatment of gold. Missing is the tenderness of a Mario Pinton, the wantonness of a Karl Fritsch, the eroticism of a Pat Flynn, or the material voluptuousness of a Giovanni Corvaja.

Five years ago, Bettina Schoenfelder stated

that, for jewelry, "the period of spectacular rebellion is over." Maybe it is, and maybe we do need to look to "an abundance of contextual data fields which provide the material for the stories that constitute jewelry."[8] For context, go back to "10 Goldsmiths," an exhibition at the Rezac Gallery in 1988. Two artists were American, and only one, Harold O'Connor, is in this current show. In the accompanying catalogue, Ian Wardropper, Associate Curator of European Decorative Arts and Sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago, observed of the artists included: "Some are interested in breaking boundaries between art forms and allowing jewelry a voice in the expanded dialogue between the arts. Some walk a fine line between making costly objects and spoofing that activity, questioning the nature of material possessions. Some are more interested in contemporary design and the relation of their work to current fashion." Such a range serves the field well. It would be an understatement to say that a survey of American goldsmithing is overdue, and even Michael Monroe would agree that "The Art of Gold" is the first word on the subject, not the last.

The estimable Hermann Jünger described his coming of age in Hanau, Germany, "the Town of Noble Jewellery," in which a state school of jewelry had existed for 250 years. "For me, a goldsmith was one who above all draws or sculpts; goldsmithing was only another word for 'art.' It did not dawn on me that this activity starts first of all with craft."[9] Thanks to the many teachers who set the standards, we now know this too. But go see for yourself. "The Art of Gold" will be traveling around the country for the next two years. The twenty-first century could be time for the next American gold rush. ⧗



Kent Raible
Pregnant Chalice, 2002
18k yellow gold, 18k white gold, 18k pink gold, fine silver, sterling silver, diamonds, rubies, sapphires, chrysacolla, opals
7 5/8 x 4 1/4 x 4 1/4"

Marjorie Simon is a metalsmith and writer based in New Jersey.
All images courtesy ExhibitsUSA.

1 Goldwork in West Africa is relatively recent, as copper was traditionally the predominant metal. It was largely European interest in gold that elevated its value in Africa. Eugenia Herbert, *Red Gold of Africa: Copper in Precolonial History and Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 296.
2 Exodus, 37:10.
3 Flinders Petrie, *The Arts and Crafts of Ancient Egypt* (Edinburgh: Foulis Ltd., 1909; London: Random House UK, 1996 reprint).
4 Hermann Schadt, *Goldsmiths' Art: 5,000 Years of Jewelry and Hollowware* (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche, 1966), 23.
5 Ernle Bradford, *English Victorian Jewelry* (Middlesex, England:Spring Books, 1967), 102.
6 George Ch. Chourmouziadis, *Gold of the World* (Athens: Kapon Editions, n.d.), 106.
7 Sophie Connell, *Metropolitan Jewelry* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991), 19.
8 Bettina Schoenfelder, in *Schmucktriebe 1998: Making Jewelry, Owning Jewelry, Wearing Jewelry* (Pforzheim, Germany: Berufskolleg für Formgebung Schmuck und Gerät an der Goldschmiedeschule mit Uhrmacherschule, 1998). English translation.
9 Hermann Jünger, *About Jewellery and "Making"* (Frankfurt: Anabas-Verlag, 1996), 25.

COMMISSIONS

by Elizabeth Broadrup Lieberman

clockwise from above
Glenice Lesley Matthews
Ceremonial Mace, 2002
fine silver, sterling silver, 9k yellow gold, curly Jarrah wood
53 x 7 x 7"
Commissioned by Edith Cowan University, Western Australia

Cynthia Eid
Cake Server, 2002
sterling silver
12 x 2 x 2"
Commissioned by Ronald Abramson Gallery: Pritam and Eames, East Hampton, New York
Photo: Cynthia Eid

Thomas Hill
Flea, 2002
copper, steel, enamel paint, American walnut
11 x 12 x 4" (excluding base)
Commissioned by Scott Andrae
Photo: Robin Dial

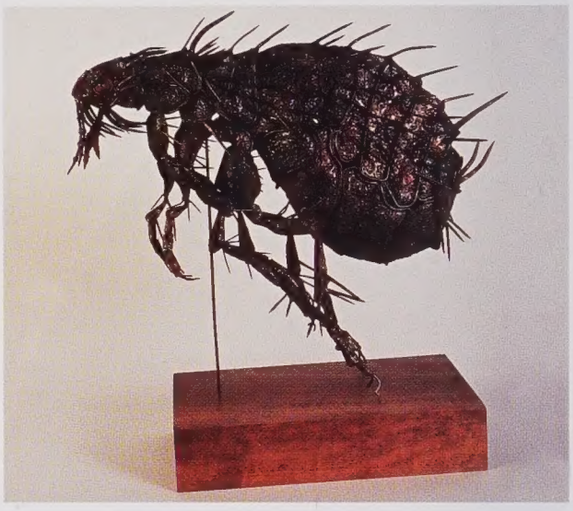
Glenice Lesley Matthews, *Ceremonial Mace*, 2002

Western Australia's Edith Cowan University commissioned a ceremonial mace to commemorate the school's centennial in 2002. Named for the first woman elected to Australia's parliament, the university grew from the union of eight teachers and arts colleges in the Perth area. Administration officials asked metalsmith Glenice Lesley Matthews to create the mace, requesting a contemporary design that incorporated past and future: the university's history as eight formerly independent colleges and its potential as a dynamic, multicultural educational community. Matthews chose a strong, dense local wood called curly Jarrah for the mace's shaft, which bears symbolic silver elements at each end. At the mace's head, a swirling cone of silver represents the future by alluding to modern architecture at the new Joondalup campus. Matthews fabricated the asymmetric cone from 1.5mm pure silver sheet, using rolling and folding techniques she learned while studying with metalsmith Heiki Seppa at Washington University, St. Louis, as a graduate student. The cone bears Edith Cowan University's modern symbols: on the exterior are sterling silver waves oxidized to black, representing communications, and gold stars of the Australian flag's Southern Cross. The cone's interior flat surface features a sunburst pierced from 9k yellow gold, behind flames of knowledge in pure silver. Providing balance at the mace's foot, Matthews designed a traditional silver finial and orb adorned with four cast-silver kangaroo paw flowers, native to Western Australia. These blossoms support a circular silver band depicting crests of the university's eight original colleges, in tribute to the past. After 600 hours of fabrication, Matthews presented the mace to Edith Cowan University for its centennial celebration in April 2002, and the mace now serves as an important new symbol in graduation ceremonies at the university's campuses.

Cynthia Eid, *Cake Server*, 2002

Cynthia Eid's sterling silver *Cake Server*, commissioned by Ronald Abramson, is a "sequel" to a successful original. A metalsmith known for her functional hollowware and jewelry, Eid received a request from Benton Seymour Rabinovitch in 1997 to create a broad-bladed silver server for his collection. Rabinovitch published a photograph of the "pudding server" in his book *Contemporary Silver: Commissioning, Designing, Collecting* (2000). Abramson saw Eid's server in the book and contacted her through her gallery to commission a cake server in a similar style. Eid faced the challenge of designing a new piece that, while unique, also embodied the style and grace of her 1997 work. Eid's new design echoes its predecessor in several ways: both are made from a single piece of silver sheet and feature a leaf-shaped blade that flows into a twisted, textured handle. The pudding server, however, has a rounded, spoonish blade with an uplifted edge, while the cake server's blade is flat with a straight, serrated edge, appropriate to its function. Eid fashioned the cake server from a solid sheet of smooth satin-finished sterling silver, which she struck repeatedly with a cross-peen hammer to create a finely striated texture evident in the blade. Using a diamond

saw in a flexible shaft, she scored the silver in a curve, then foldformed and twisted the sheet to form the handle. The handle's elegantly tapering whorls display contrasting smooth and striated textures. Eid designed the asymmetric cake server with a left-handed orientation to suit its owner and completed the work in May 2002.



Thomas Hill, *Flea*, 2002

Trained as a draftsman and metalsmith in the United Kingdom, Thomas Hill uses mild steel wire to create "sketches" in three dimensions. His work characteristically translates life studies of birds or animals in motion into open wire sculptures, which he enhances with steel or copper sheet and copper mesh. Several of Hill's "insect tiaras" caught the eye of Scott Andrae, a graphic designer in San Francisco, where Hill now makes his home. A native Australian fascinated by insects, Andrae commissioned Hill to sculpt a massive flea in his signature style. Since life study of the flea was impossible, Andrae provided Hill with three-dimensional computer drawings and electron microscope images of fleas. Hill's resulting sculpture is anatomically faithful to these images. To fabricate *Flea*, Hill fashioned a steel wire structure that forms the "skeleton" of the piece. He then used a long-angled spike to hammer thin formed sheets of copper and brass into the skeleton from inside, soldering them into place in an intuitive collage technique. The rich, dense surface that evolved from layer upon layer of hammered metal sheet forms the flea's outer body, which is studded with sharp spines. Hill's most difficult challenge was creating the flea's six three-dimensional legs, made by soldering formed pieces of metal sheet together. Hill completed the enormous *Flea* after one week of fabrication and delivered it to Andrae, who displays it in his San Francisco home.

Elizabeth Broadrup Lieberman is a freelance writer living in Michigan.

For more information and guidelines about submitting commissions to *Metalsmith* visit www.snagmetalsmith.org

"RENEE ZETTLE-STERLING: ENGAGING MEMORY"

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY GALLERY, ALLENDALE, MICHIGAN
AUGUST 23–SEPTEMBER 27, 2002

by KIRSTIN RINGELBERG

Although Zettle-Sterling began her preparations for "Engaging Memory" before the dramatic world events of the last year and well before the question of war with Iraq was engaged nationally, the timing of her exhibition is perfect. Addressing issues of warfare, imminent death, understanding our enemies, and communicating memories, the installation resonates with bittersweet attempts to come to terms with our human propensity to destroy each other and, by extension, ourselves. Although the more factual elements of the show relate directly to wars that may seem distant to younger attendees (actual letters written by soldiers and a nurse during World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam, printed onto clear Lucite and hung on the dimly lit walls, as well as the recordings of the artist interviewing veterans from her native Pennsylvania, which the visitor may listen to through headphones placed next to pictures of the subjects), it was clear that these documents of wartime affected visitors. With war on our minds, it was hard to avoid making connections between the pain, desires, and fundamental humanity of these soldiers of the past and those of our own time.

Divided by a wall of corrugated metal and frosted plastic from these direct and "real" artifacts of war, the mixed-media sculptures Zettle-Sterling calls "Actualities" were presented on waist-high pedestals laid out in a regimented pattern, recalling soldiers at attention or the repeating grave markers of military cemeteries. The regularity of the pedestals, each printed with a ghostly sepia-toned detail of a different war photograph at the top center, was offset by the distinctly individual object placed upon each. The "Actualities," small objects made primarily of both fabricated and cast metal, require an intimate viewing distance that is facilitated by the absence of glass or plastic casing and the purposely dim gallery lighting. Most of the objects are "mouthpieces," in some cases with metal lips attached to their ends, each relating to a different aspect of war, camaraderie, death, or memory. Perfectly crafted, the pieces appeal both as formally beautiful objects and metaphors for the experience of relaying memories from one person to another.

It was this element of communicating, or rather the difficulty of communicating, such vital and primordial issues that formed the most powerful impact of the installation. The tension established between the actual letters, photographs, and interviews and the "Actualities," Zettle-Sterling's interpretations of the stories she had collected, demanded that the viewer engage these memories intimately. The visitor encounters the "Actualities" first and somewhat abstractly, then passes beyond the semiopaque dividing walls to encounter the specific letters, voices, and pictures of actual veterans, then passes back to the "Actualities," now loaded with a new significance.

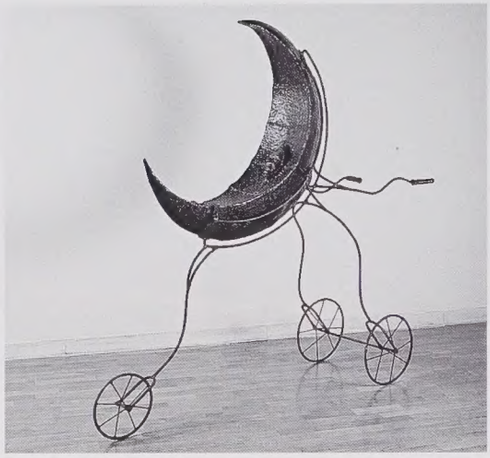
Actuality #4, with its two mouths at opposite ends of a plastic tube filled with gunpowder, suggests simultaneously our desire to tell our stories, to reach each other, and the fact that this communication is mediated by so many things that can alter the message (much like our childhood game of "telephone"). This exhibition is about the transfer of memories from one person to another through a variety of media, and the inevitable alteration of the story as it is communicated. Rather than fight a losing battle against these alterations, Zettle-Sterling embraces the process as a whole, thereby leaving the viewers feeling more connected to each other and the past.

Kirstin Ringelberg is Assistant Professor of Art History at Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

clockwise from far left
Actuality #4, 2002
nickel, silver, bronze, doilies
4 x 6 x 8"

Actuality #2, 2002
copper, silver, brass
3 x 11 x 2"

Actuality #8, 2002
copper, bronze, silver, brass
7 x 4 x 4"



"MATTHEW ZUPNICK: DIRECTIONS (RECENT SCULPTURE)"

THE MERVIN GALLERY, ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, BLOOMINGTON
NOVEMBER 5–DECEMBER 6, 2002

by DOROTHY JOINER

Matthew Zupnick's free-wheeling, visual "tales" in bronze, steel, and wood are somewhat analogous to Scheherezade's nocturnal confabulation, which repeatedly delayed her execution for one more day. Just as the heroine of *1001 Arabian Nights* piqued the interest of her listener with human antics, so does Zupnick build his sculptural stories around people. They appear as diminutive nudes often lopped off at the waist, a half sometimes melded to an object such as a trumpet or a branch, and as masks with hollow, almond-shaped eyes and a quirky, slitlike mouth. Whereas Scheherezade told stories because she had to, the sculptor seems impelled to spin yarns out of an innate fervor for the fantasy experienced in play and in dreams. With the same paradoxical duality of dream narratives, his objects are both realistic and zany. And like dreams, which condense and compact life experiences—to borrow Freudian terms—Zupnick's art reflects wide-ranging influences: Native American art of the Northwest and Alaska, Japanese Noh masks, and the Northern European traditions of Bosch and Brueghel.

Reminiscent of Brueghel's *Children's Games*, Zupnick's objects invite participation. A fanciful baby carriage that really rolls, *Moon Boy* is a crescent of hammered steel supported by a configuration of rusted metal bent into graceful Art Nouveau curves. Embedded within the concavity, a mature face with slightly skewed features evinces pleasure as if discovering the heavens like a child from his perambulator. Begging to be rolled, the gargantuan spoked wheels of *Almost Ground Level* tilt inward toward the top, with a tiny swing suspended by strings from the slender rod joining the centers of the wheels. Perched in the swing, a diminutive nude dangles his feet just above the floor, dwarfed by the oversized structure securing his seat. (As on all Zupnick's little men, a faultlessly crafted virile member falls flaccidly, in accord with the laws of gravity.)

Most of Zupnick's works are, in fact, interactive. A real seesaw fabricated of bronze with steel trusses, *Teeter-Totter* has seats of carved wooden faces with exaggerated foreheads like Noh masks. A sphere with spiky projections elevated on a pole, *Mood Changer* allows the viewer to turn the anxious face seen on one side of the sphere to the more agreeable visage on the other. And *Hinged Head*, one of a series of round "trophies" on the wall, affords the option of flipping one hinged miniature countenance for another.

And as dreams are not without their terrors, so too are Zupnick's little figures often beleaguered. The Boschian *Man with Red Socks* kicks his crimson-clad feet in the air as his head and torso are sucked into a long pipe leading to a spiked sphere, a menacing contraption that can be guided around on wheels. Similarly trapped, the Lilliputian figure of *Swinging Sieve* waves his legs, arching the left foot in surprise/pain as his body is swallowed up in a bullet-shaped container. Also ensnared by an unyielding mechanical configuration are the Siamese figures of *Closed System*. Joined at the skulls, twinned heads emerge from the ends of parallel steel tubes. Triplicated trapezoids, each smaller than the one below, support the tubing to form a kind of see-through pyramid.

Especially appealing are the expressive carved heads. Coupling an unnatural elongated shape with realistic features, *Spring Loaded Head* rests horizontally on a sturdy steel spring, ready to bobble at the viewer's touch. As though pained by his perilous stance, the strained face confirms his tension. Indifferent to his peculiar context, on the other hand, the resigned head of *Mid-West Lure* is joined to an outsized fishhook, a rope imitating the line coiled nearby. Taking on the characteristics of his "prey," the head is splotched with red circles like the markings of a trout.

The exhibition's smaller heads are intriguing as well. In *Trophy Totem*, Zupnick stacks five in bronze and sets the totem on a steel round displayed on the wall. And he mounts another five carved from wood—each distinctive and individual—along steel rails, inviting the observer to adjust their positions at will, as one would move the counters of an abacus.

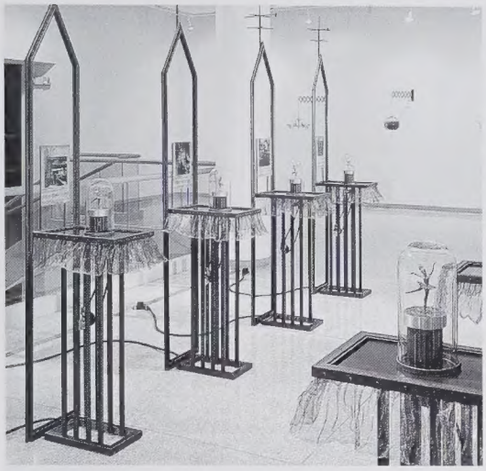
Matthew Zupnick offers engaging and open-ended visual narratives about the human situation. His figures seem to be at the mercy of a world they can neither control nor fully understand, an aleatoric reality that sometimes occasions delight but more often brings consternation.

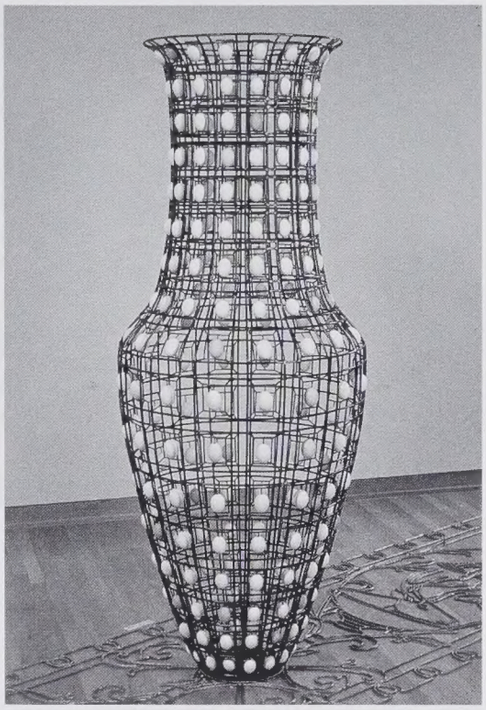
Dorothy Joiner is the Corn Professor of art history at LaGrange College, Georgia, and directs the State University of West Georgia's summer art program in France.

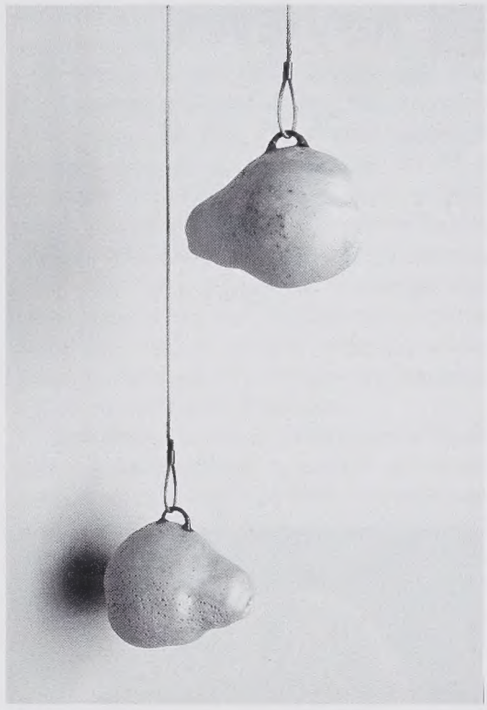
clockwise from bottom left
Swinging Sieve, 2002
bronze, steel
11 1/4 x 3 x 6 1/2"

Spring Loaded Head, 2002
steel, wood
44 x 24 x 24"

Moon Boy, 2002
steel, bronze
72 x 29 x 21"







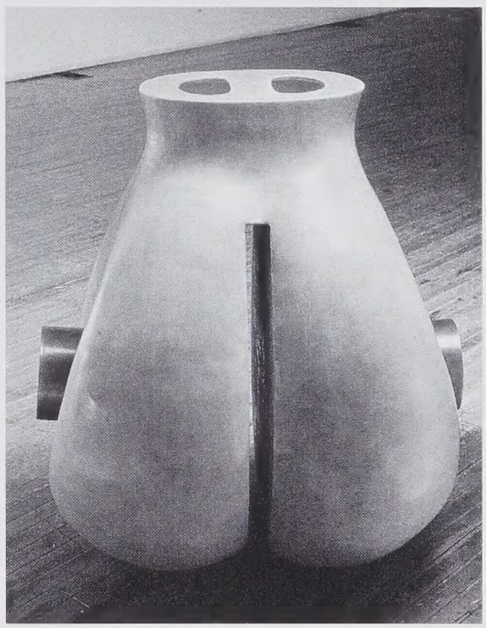
"MAKING MEANING: METALSMITHING, OBJECTS AND CONTINGENCIES IN THE NEXT MILLENNIUM"

ELAINE L. JACOB GALLERY, WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY, DETROIT, MICHIGAN
NOVEMBER 22, 2002–JANUARY 24, 2003

Its somewhat cumbersome and confusing title notwithstanding, this excellent show features 23 pieces by six conceptually diverse and technically talented sculptors. Each artist considers him- or herself a metalsmith working within that field's historic boundaries and participating in craft's discourse. As curator Evan Larson proposes, 'This work ...extends the field of metalsmithing beyond jewelry and utilitarian objects [and] focuses on the craftsperson's role of making meaning through objects." He further suggests that "works in 'Making Meaning' are concerned directly or indirectly with the contingencies created by mass production and the shifting need for craft in our culture."

Some of these artworks do indeed directly reference traditionally produced precious metal objects. Myra Mimlitsch-Gray's heroically oversized serving trays are constructed of individually amplified planishing marks, hammer blows that reflect the intensive handwork underpinning, in this case, colonial silversmithing. Their surprising scale negates their use and shifts attention to the pictorial space. Kim Cridler also vastly enlarges classic presentation pieces. Her work mines not so much inherent labor as physical structure. In *Kept*, the skin of use is stripped to reveal a kind of steel skeleton that evokes the memory of socially defined forms. All potential for simple nostalgia is erased by the urgent physicality of hundreds of blown eggshells mounted at the surface. We relate bodily to the piece's acute tension between desire and impossibility, its simultaneous mass and fragility.

Heather White's series of "Retractable Crowns" approaches the decorative arts as anachronisms that continue to resonate symbolically. Actual crowns, an absurdist display on modern heads, litter the current visual landscape, reflecting a time when they were powerful symbols. Wall-mounted expandable industrial brackets allow the viewer to inject his own head into a crown and ponder timeless



ideas—burden, direction, domain, and illumination—manifested in an eclectic mix of materials and techniques. Nature, science, and relationships inform Susanna Speirs's subtle cast glass and metal wall pieces. They bring to mind sterling compotes reduced to pulleys and cables, suggesting the loss of beauty and social engagement in contemporary presentation. In fact, it is their presentation as much as their ideas that distance both artists' work from their material traditions.

The collision between human maker and the emerging industrial world is implied by many of the exhibition's artists. Lin Stanionis makes the dilemma explicit. She conflates flesh, metal, and concrete in a dialogue of sensuality and dead weight. Translucent encaustic skins cover vaguely anthropomorphic volumes pierced by geometric mass. These vessels stretch the definition of metalsmithing into questionable territory and prompt larger questions surrounding the consequences of scale in metalsmithing and sculpture. Beverly Penn's *The Border: Pas de Deux* is an installation of ten stations consisting of a welter of materials, images, and text, punctuated by turning ballerinas under domes and mechanically driven music boxes. The cacophony addresses border culture, with its perpetual negotiations of social and political exigencies.

A thematically organized exhibition can, on the one hand, allow for a focused presentation, where juxtaposed works comment on each other in unexpected and beneficial ways. On the other hand, a curatorial premise may constrain or impose meanings that the artists never intended. Larson has wisely chosen artists whose stated intent comfortably meshes with his own. But in so doing, he has indirectly raised the vexing question of the definition of craft and sculpture. While many craft artists work at considerable scale, metals has the unique pitfall that large work simply tends to look more like sculpture than not. It's easy to let distinctions go unaddressed; do they even matter? The premise here is that metalsmithing has a future and it resides in meaningful objects.

Susan Holt is an artist and metalsmith who lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

clockwise from top left
Beverly Penn
The Border: Pas de Deux, 1997
mixed media with music boxes
dimensions variable
Photo: Tim Thayer

Kim Cridler
Kept, 2000
steel, egg shells, satin
79 x 48 x 164"

Susanna Speirs
Staggered, 2001
glass, cable, copper
38 x 3 x 6"

Lin Stanionis
Untitled, 2001
encaustic, lead
43 x 30 x 27"

"CELEBRATING ART NOUVEAU: THE KREUZER COLLECTION"

VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, RICHMOND
OCTOBER 5, 2002–JANUARY 19, 2003

by JANE REYNOLDS McCAULEY

Do fashion trends spawn the rise of art movements? Perhaps not, but certainly the "wasp waist," popular around the turn of the nineteenth century in Paris and Vienna and other capital cities in western Europe, did send notable artisans scurrying to their studios to create avant-garde buckles, belts, necklaces, and buttons characterized by natural motifs, often less expensive stones, and cheaper metals—contributing to the rise of the highly creative Art Nouveau period.

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond captured the essence of this movement in its exhibition "Celebrating Art Nouveau: The Kreuzer Collection." The Munich collectors devoted 20 years to acquiring the 484 pieces comprising the show. "Their generosity produced the greatest collection of its kind in the world," states Michael Brand, the museum's director. Display after display highlighted this diverse collection of functional jewelry produced between 1890 and 1910, predominantly belt buckles, a few necklaces and button sets, all representing the Symbolist, Jugendstil, Art Nouveau, and Liberty styles. Samples from the 1900 Paris World Fair were also on view; works from nearly all the major companies and designers at the peak of the movement were included.

Influences on design during this time were surprisingly far ranging, from Islam to Egypt, Scandinavia, and Japan. Strongly apparent in the jewelry is Art Nouveau's signature trademark—the whiplash curve. History holds that this was adapted from the gestures of a well-known dancer, Loie Fuller, who rose from humble beginnings in a Chicago boarding house. Innovative for her time, she stepped away from traditional movements in ballet and used light, color, and fabric in her performances to represent flowers, butterflies, and fire. Even to the unschooled eye, the flowing, intricate curves in the metals of the jewelry make a plausible connection to the flashing and fluid gestures of the dancer.

Distinctive motifs—stylized, abstract, or geometric plants and animals, humans divine and diabolic, and scenes from literature or operas—embellished the swirling metals. However, different countries emphasized different themes; thus, the consulting curator of the show, Fred Brandt, along with the museum's decorative arts curator David Curry, organized the galleries by region, enabling the viewer to more readily discern each country's popular motifs.

For instance, in the Austria, Germany, and Bohemia (now the Czech Republic) room, seashells, insects, and musical instruments were featured in several buckles, many from unknown designers. The metals used varied from nickel to silver and copper, as well as glass, and cloisonne. Among the favorite stones were lapis lazuli, mother-of-pearl, and kunzite.

Notable buckles from the United States, where Art Nouveau never achieved the same popularity, showcased angles, cherubs, and sometimes whimsical, curly-haired ladies crowned with roses. Many of these pieces were the creation of the William B. Kerr firm in New Jersey, the country's most prolific producer.

Great Britain emphasized nature scenes filled with flowers, and, of course, the ever-appealing British garden. The dominant jeweler in Britain was Archibald Knox for Liberty and Company. Visitors can hardly overlook two buckles, one combined with a hair comb, the other by Alexander Fisher, a stunning oversized piece embellished with scenes from Richard Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, and constructed of nickel silver, enamel inlays, and eight opals.

Blue enameling and Celtic designs were prominent with the British, while complevé enameling, a process of infusing glass and pigment to resemble inlay, remained popular in France; 13 examples are in the French gallery. It's no surprise that the more impressive pieces here are attributed to René Lalique, the most famous Paris jeweler of his time. His works in coral, silver, gold, and complevé enameling are unique, often reflecting a rare delicacy despite their size.

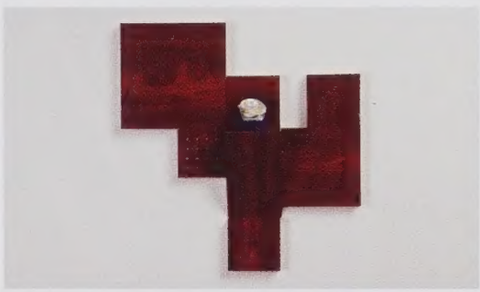
High demand for Art Nouveau spread rapidly, ultimately contributing to the downfall of the movement shortly before World War I. Brief revivals have surfaced and still do today; no doubt that trend will live on with the contribution of this exhibition.

Jane Reynolds McCauley is a freelance writer and fiber artist currently residing in Charlottesville, Virginia.

clockwise from top
Archibald Knox, for Liberty & Co.
Buckle, 1906
silver, enamel
2 x 4 1/2"

René Lalique
Belt Buckle, ca. 1900
silver, gold, champlevé enamel, coral
Photo: Katherine Wetzel

Max Josef Gradi, for Theodore Fahmer
Buckle, ca. 1901-02
silver, chrysoprases
1 3/4 x 3"



"INVENTING CONTEMPORARY ORNAMENT"

DOROTHY UBER BRYAN GALLERY,
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY, OHIO
AUGUST 27–SEPTEMBER 27, 2002

by KATHLEEN BROWNE

Although a number of the works in "Inventing Contemporary Ornament" had already been seen on the pages of this magazine or at SOFA, it was a pleasure to see them in person and without throngs of people. The works selected by curator Tom Muir provide a view of the breadth and depth of what is being made in our field. Muir's goal was to present a widely diverse group of objects, and while some artists' ideas intersect, for the most part the work of each stands singularly.

Historicism figures prominently in the work of Richard Mawdsley and Keith Lewis. For the past decade or so, Mawdsley has been making monumental works based on the Renaissance standing cup. Standing cups, made as presentation pieces, were often elaborate displays of the goldsmith's skill; Mawdsley's *Gamma, Water Tower #3* is no exception. As its name implies, its subject matter is the water tower, which, in Mawdsley's words, "at one time represented a significant civic achievement." Mawdsley has simultaneously created a monument to this achievement and a memorial to its eclipse.

Keith Lewis's work, *Neckpiece for Zymrina: A Prostitute of Pompeii*, marks a break from his signature work, at least stylistically. Although Lewis states that he is borrowing the style and format of classical Greek and Roman jewelry, they are more reminiscent of mid-nineteenth century Classical Revival pieces, particularly the jewels by Eugene Fontenay. This neckpiece's five jewels depict the prostitute Zymrina at work performing various sex acts. Like most of Lewis's work, at its core is the commemoration of marginalized members of society. The metalwork really measures up in this piece, as he seamlessly integrates stylized patterns drawn from female and male genitalia with the conventions of classical jewelry. However, the rendering of the figures in the enamels seems folksy in contrast to the mastery of the metalwork. Lewis's work hasn't lost its "in-your-face" edge, and by subverting historical motifs, he has added humor and depth.

Marilyn Da Silva's ambitious narrative sculptures tell tales of vulnerability and survival. They seem to have been drawn upon personal events but employ a broader symbolic language. Birds are central to these narratives, and, while

they are not anthropomorphized, their resilience and adaptability is meant to reflect our own. *Tamagosya* displays a bird in a plumed harness drawing a two-wheeled cage or carriage. An egg sits upright in the cage, poignantly signifying that the burdens we carry are often of our own making. Da Silva is an alumnus of Bowling Green State University and recently received that institution's Dorothy MacKenzie Annual Purchase Award.

Although the products of two distinct sensibilities, the works of Thelma Coles and Sharon Church share the same underlying concept. Cole's wall sculpture *Sorting* is a quiet and cerebral piece, consisting of a wire outline of a female torso within which a plumb bob, heavy and overtly male, is effortlessly supported by a delicate matrix of draping chain. In contrast, Church's fecund and sexual neckpiece, titled *Envy*, consists of a forged element that encircles the neck, coming together at the breastbone where a budding flower sits. Cascading from this point to the belly button are plump leaves articulated in silver that end in two large pod- or phalluslike pendants carved from antlers. This ritualistic piece both protects and empowers the wearer. Both works illustrate how centering and powerful the integration of our female and male qualities can be.

A number of the artists in this exhibition investigate new materials or push the boundaries of traditional materials. Joe Wood's exuberant creations are designed with the aid of a computer, then printed in 3-D with a Z402 printer. The solid mass is then coated with a mix of epoxy resin and enamel powder. The resulting biomorphic forms are colorful, humorous, and, although not in any way nostalgic, give a nod to 1960s Pop. This is the first interesting studio jewelry to come out of CAD/CAM technologies; it gives me hope for its future use.

Maria Phillips is one of a new wave of artists who are using enamel as part of a broader palette, not as an end unto itself. She continues the legacy of innovators like June Schwarcz and Jamie Bennett, both of whom have breathed new life into the rather stodgy field. Her unconventional pieces, created by the processes of electroforming and, more recently, welding steel (*Spire*), elaborate on the beauty of decay. The simultaneously seductive and repulsive enameled surfaces both celebrate and reject the intrinsic beauty of the material.

The intrinsic value of materials and skill are also explored in three installations titled *Material Conceits #1, #2,* and *#3*, by Kate Wagle. Wagle's wall panels display her skill at marquetry, but do so irreverently by using wood-grained Formica. On a Formica shelf at the center of each wall installation sits an oversized ring, which is tightly wedged into the ubiquitous velvet ring box. The ring, humbly yet skillfully wrought from a single strip of silver, forms a rose, as much a symbol of romance as the diamond ring. Wagle's work is an indulgence in the pure pleasure of making while at the same time critiquing the fetishizing of materials and skill.

The joy of making is evident in each of the objects in this exhibition regardless of the diversity of intentions. With few exceptions, Tom Muir has assembled significant and/or signature works from each artist. The only inconsistency in this show is the number of works representing each artist; several displayed only one piece while others showed 5-8 works each. That said, Muir has brought an exceptional collection of work to the region.

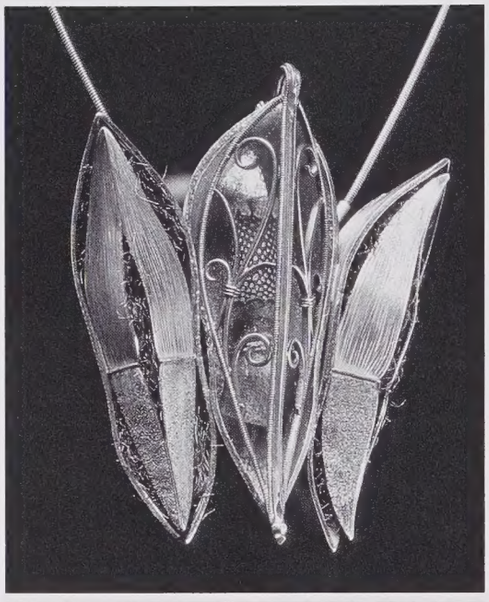
Kathleen Browne heads the Jewelry/Metals/Enameling Department at Kent State University, Ohio.

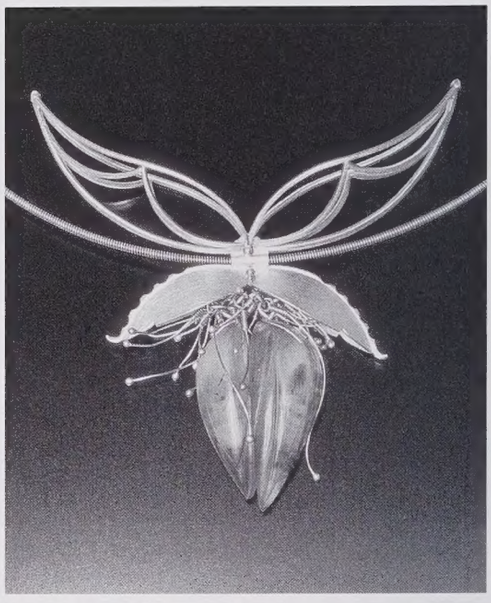
clockwise from top left
Joe Wood
Lumpy, 2002
enamel powder, epoxy resin, Z402 computer print, silver
2 x 4 1/2 x 4 1/2"

Kate Wagle
Material Conceit #3, 2001
Formica, sterling silver, pearls
19 x 18 x 4"

Keith Lewis
Neckpiece for Zymrina; A Prostitute of Pompeii, 2002
sterling silver, fine silver, 24k gold plate, enamel, pearls
diameter 10 1/4"

Maria Phillips
Spire, 2002
steel, enamel, silver
32 x 4 x 4"

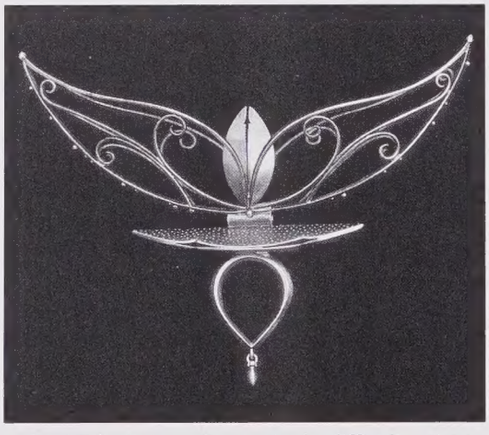




"LORI TALCOTT: ARBOR MUNDI"

FACÈRÉ JEWELRY ART GALLERY, SEATTLE
NOVEMBER 6–20, 2002

by MATTHEW KANGAS



Lori Talcott is an increasingly difficult artist to situate within the context of both Pacific Northwest jewelry art and American jewelry art in general. A former assistant of Ramona Solberg's, with all that implies (connections to folk art traditions, openness to far-ranging ethnic art influences), Talcott is only now emerging from the overwhelming influence of Norwegian folk art and its metal jewelry traditions into an expressive style more heterodox and contemporary.

Her most recent body of work looks forward—to a more fully individual style—and backward—to a rigorously observed adherence to Norwegian ceremonial jewelry forms. Add to that a crazed pantheism that seems to invest in the brooches, rings, and necklaces an affinity with natural forms, and one begins to see how Talcott differs from other "Age of Solberg" artists: Ron Ho, Kiff Slemmons, Laurie Hall.

Talcott is at once less indebted to Third World sources than her older colleagues and ex-mentors and more in awe of one particular European folk tradition: the centuries of Viking and, later, Victorian-era Norwegian bridal jewelry. The question is, how can such an earnest student go on retrieving Scandinavian models and ever attain a creative individuality of her own?

In her ninth solo exhibition since 1994, Talcott breaks through to an image vocabulary that may still be steeped in distant historical sources but that begins to carry its own West Coast contemporary look. Ecology more than Viking myth dominates the group of neck-, ear-, and hand-worn objects of gold, silver, brass, and nickel. The change of the seasons (*Autumn Pod; Winter Wreath*), the similarity between plants and insects (*Mardöll I* and *II*; *Skeleton Leaf*), and the extraordinary regenerative powers of seeds (*Winter Pod*) appear in strong visual forms, activated by the wearer's body, to be sure, but not dependent upon pseudo-performative ceremonies re-enacted by the light of midsummer bonfires hundreds of feet high.

Nature's chambers within chambers are evoked in *Arbor Mundi*, a three-part neckpiece that opens and closes silver compartments sheltering a dried magnolia stem. *Brisings' Stole* and *Winter Wreath* overlap, respectively, graduated silver and brass leaf forms and wildly irregular connected ones. The former is protecting and empowering nature in a dormant phase, extending downward in a V across the wearer's chest, while the latter sits atop the neck and collarbones, its spiky dimensionality warding off "evil spirits," yet attractive and tactile as well.

This exhibition is Talcott's most varied grouping yet, far less of a piece than her prior thematically controlled series. Meditations on irregular natural forms come close to Art Nouveau jewelry at times, including the vaguely dragonfly and butterfly silhouettes of *That Art Thou* and *Mardöll II*. *Skeleton Leaf*, with its tiny gray pearls and darkened silver outline, is appealingly morbid in a *fin de siècle* way, something worn by Morticia Addams when receiving her daughter's suitor.

The problematic of text in contemporary art is fully addressed here. If language is so specific and exhortatory in the artwork, the viewer may feel scolded or inadequately informed. Worse, language in art can anchor the piece in too culturally specific a way, hindering any more universal communication available to art. In Talcott's hands, however, photo-etched passages in Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse act as decorative reminders of her older sources. They add surface-texture variety to *Brisings' Stole* and *Brisings' Ruff*. The latter, rigid and possibly confining, with its raised, perforated metal lace collar, also adds small gray pearls that alternately shine and disappear against the underside of the silver folds. Text here is like a line in a dream, repeated long after the dream—or original folk tradition—is forgotten and transformed.

Several of the necklace pendants may also be worn as rings, although they are so large as to seem cumbersome on a hand. Better that they operate on a chest, flat or rounded, a presentation "pedestal" that proposes and invites conversation and interpretation like the best of Talcott's art.

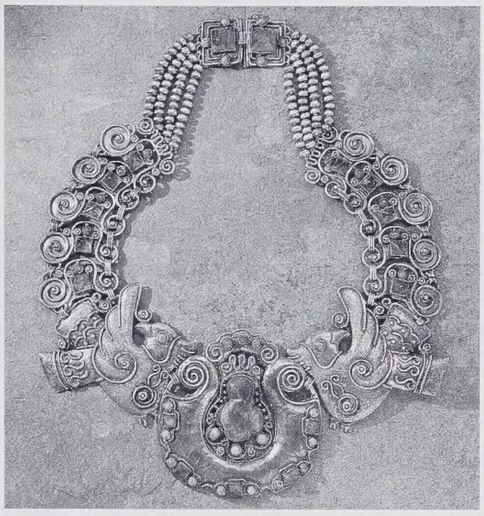
Perhaps better known and revered in Norway because of her decade-long researches there, Talcott really should receive an award from the king for all the attention she has brought abroad to overlooked Norwegian jewelry traditions. But that was the Lori Talcott of the nostalgic, world folk art appreciation years. "Arbor Mundi" brought together objects that could never be confused with historic examples. Instead, they are poetic extrapolations in metal of the highest creative and technical power imaginable.

Matthew Kangas, a widely published art critic living in Seattle, is the author of the recent books, *Bertil Vallien: Somna/Vakna* and *Robert Willson: Image-Maker*.

clockwise from left
Mardöll II, 2002
4 3/4 x 3 3/4 x 1"
Photo: Doug Yaple

Arbor Mundi, 2002
silver, gold, brass, steel, gold leaf and magnolia stem
3 3/4 x 3 x 3/4"
Photo: Doug Yaple

Mardöll I, 2002
18k gold, silver
3/4 x 3 1/4 x 3/4"
Photo: Doug Yaple



"MAESTROS DE PLATA: WILLIAM SPRATLING AND THE MEXICAN SILVER RENAISSANCE"

SAN ANTONIO MUSEUM OF ART, TEXAS
OCTOBER 6, 2002–JANUARY 5, 2003

MINGEI INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM,
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
FEBRUARY 17 - MAY 11, 2003

CRAFT AND FOLK ART MUSEUM,
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
JUNE 14 - SEPTEMBER 7, 2003

NATIONAL HISPANIC CULTURAL CENTER,
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO
OCTOBER 18, 2003 - JANUARY 18, 2004

NEWCOMB ART GALLERY,
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA
MARCH 6 - MAY 3, 2004

by CLAIRE HOLLIDAY

This exhibition tells the remarkable story of William Spratling and his vision to develop a model cottage industry in Taxco, a hillside silver mining town in the state of Guerrero, Mexico, where he settled in 1928. The business he founded in 1931, Taller de las Delicias, included four workshops: furnituremaking, weaving, tinsmithing, and, most importantly, silversmithing. Today, the jewelers and silversmiths of Taxco produce the greatest volume of silverwork in Mexico. Sadly, many will say that the quality of this work is far inferior to that produced from the 1930s through the 1960s, the intensely creative period featured in this exhibition.

Spratling was not the first American to influence jewelry design and production in Mexico during the 1930s. Frederick Davis preceded Spratling, but the impact Spratling would have on a community's livelihood and, in time, its identity would not be equaled.

In 1931 Spratling hired two Mexican *maestros* to train his first group of silverworkers. He was both the director of the workshop and the sole designer. His designs included images of ancient Mexico: images from original pre-Columbian clay stamps, carved images of Aztec gods, and figures appearing in ancient codices. In the 1950s Spratling found inspiration in the art of Alaskan cultures. He also incorporated a variety of available natural materials: locally mined stones such as amethyst and azure-malachite, obsidian, rosewood, ebony, and tortoise shell. We see such influences in the first piece presented in the exhibition: Spratling's striking *Jaguar Brooch* from 1960-65, late in his career. The jaguar's spotted coat is beautifully rendered by the golden, mottled pattern of the tortoise shell.

The Spratling Taller fostered the training and the ambition of talented employees. Antonio Castillo and his family established the Taller Los Castillo in 1939–40. Los Castillo flourished with such creative industry that over 500 new designs were introduced in the year 1950. In that decade, the Los Castillo *maestros* created innovative techniques to inlay metal into stone mosaic, and are credited with the popularization of the marriage of metal technique, *metales casados*.

The Castillo piece *Fish in Waves* is a large repoussé/chased neckpiece with a companion bracelet of similar design. The piece originally had a vermeil surface, which is mostly gone; lost because this piece was worn so often, or polished so often? Either way, the thinned vermeil surface bespeaks use and care.

Other designers of Taxco's heyday, 1940–60, are represented in the exhibition: Valentin Vidaurreta, Hubert Harmon, Hector Aguilar, Jean Puiforcat, Salvador Teran, Antonio Pineda, and Sigi Pineda. There were also three female designers active during these creative decades: Ana Brilanti, Matilde Poulat, and Margot Van Voorhes Carr, aka "Margot of Taxco."

The top designers were well aware of international trends. Taxco may have been remote, but it was not isolated. The artistic inspiration of these creative designers was made tangible by the *maestros* at the bench who actually created the work. Entirely Mexican design elements of colonial architecture and folk art are evident, as well as later stylistic influences of the Art Deco movement, Modernism, and Cubism. Matilde Poulat's strongest piece in the exhibition is her flamboyant neckpiece *Doves and Flowers Necklace*. The amethyst cabochon is a stylized torso of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The fine wire curlicues adorning every surface suggest more baroque inspiration.

Spratling's work is featured throughout the exhibition, highlighting his changing designs as various business ventures prospered, crashed, and were reborn: flatware, tea and coffee services, pitchers, and a punch bowl, as well as handsome platters, boxes, candlesticks, letter openers, knives, and serving pieces. Simplicity, order, repetition, and balance characterize Spratling's work; his formal sobriety sets it apart. Other designers surpass him in expressing humor (Harmon), vivacity (Vidaurreta), and sophistication (Margot).

The last gallery area features work of Taxco's contemporary designers. Antonio Castillo's oldest daughter, Emilia, and his son, Wolmar, work independently, but both are designing vessel forms of size and stature. The work of jeweler Agnes Seebass, designer Angelica Tapia, and design partners Jason Creagh and Violante Ulrich provide examples of young talent putting a new spin on traditional themes: tightly interconnected design units, pre-Columbian design motifs, and the pairing of wood and silver, and silver and stone. Also on view is the jewelry hollowware and limited edition artist-designed sculptures manufactured by the TANE Corporation, Mexico's largest silver business founded in the 1950s.

The exhibition is huge: over 400 pieces are on display, and the galleries gleam. All text is presented in both English and Spanish. Prints, documents, design renderings, and photographs help orient the visitor to the period, to Taxco, and activity inside the workrooms of the *Talleres*. An accompanying publication, edited by guest curator Penny Morrill, is a rich resource for further study.

Claire Holliday is chair of the metals department at the Southwest School of Art and Craft in San Antonio, Texas.

clockwise from top left

Los Castillo
Fish in Waves Set, ca. 1940-1945
silver, traces of vermeil gold
necklace length 16 1/2"; pectoral 6 1/2 x 3 7/8";
cuff 4 x 2 3/8"
Photo: Matthew Marston

Matilde Poulat
Doves and Flowers Necklace, c. 1940
silver, amethyst, coral, turquoise
22 x 3 1/2"
Photo: Matthew Marston

William Spratling
Jaguar Brooch, c. 1960–1965
sterling silver, tortoiseshell
2 1/5 x 3 1/2"
Photo: Matthew Marston

LETTERS

To the Editor:

The winter issue of *Metalsmith* magazine is wonderful as usual. Most of the articles are well-written and informative. However, I must disagree with the tone of Marjorie Simon's article "Ford + Forlano: Serendipitous Structure." Though Ford and Forlano's work is beautiful, it does not represent an innovation in the use of polymer clay with precious metals. As a matter of fact, combining silver bezels and polymer clay is a rather banal use of both materials.

Simon makes blanket statements throughout the piece that refer to most polymer clay users as a group of hobbyists:

"But in a world where projects such as 'Bug Buddies' and 'Silly Snakes' are offered in books, there is little room for the aesthetic choices they [Ford + Forlano] made. They have used polymer clay for its best qualities—almost limitless texture, form, and color—to create wearable and exciting jewelry."

Obviously, the author is unaware of the superb work of such polymer clay "artists" as Judith Skinner, Donna Kato, Barbara McGuire, Dotty McMillan, Nan Roche, Marie Segal, and countless others who have developed truly creative and innovative work with polymer clays. Many of these artists have incorporated precious metals, silver and gold clays, gemstones, and glass into their work in exceptional ways.

The National Polymer Clay Guild spends a lot of its time and efforts promoting its medium as an art form. It struggles endlessly against views such as Simon's. Someone with a depth of knowledge about the polymer clay medium (see www.npcg.org) would have been a much more appropriate reviewer of Ford and Forlano's work. As it stands, metalsmiths are left with an inaccurate impression of what's going on in the polymer clay medium.

In closing, I'd like to add that plenty of metalsmiths make "Bug Buddies" and "Silly Snakes," not to mention silly little hearts and flowers and family dogs and rabbits, don't they?

Peggy Koop
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Marjorie Simon replies:

Ms. Koop is correct in stating that Ford and Forlano are not the only polymer clay artists of note. They may not even be the best. But they are the most visible in the current marketplace, participating in the top retail (Philadelphia Museum of Art and Smithsonian) and wholesale (ACC Baltimore) shows and winning awards there.

Ford and Forlano are worthy of attention because they reference the metalsmith's vocabulary while incorporating polymer clay. Bezels per se do not represent innovation, but neither do gemstones or metal clays. What matters is the content of the ideas.

Regarding a writer's qualifications, *Metalsmith* includes writers within the field and without. It goes without saying that the same level of care and research was brought to this article as with all others. Some of names listed by Ms. Koop are indeed unknown to me, nor do they appear anywhere on the Polymer Clay Guild website. Ms. Koop might have mentioned Cynthia Toops or Elise Winters as artists who were also overlooked, or the many contributors to a recent exhibition at the Brookfield Craft Center. However, it would be disingenuous to deny the attraction of polymer clay for the hobbyist. It may be that, like handmade paper, resin, and other low-tech media, more time is necessary for an aesthetic to mature.

And yes, there are certainly many jewelers who make inconsequential and derivative work ("Make your own wire jewelry at home!") but they are not in the pages of *Metalsmith* nor are they represented at SOFA.

The purpose of the article was not to critique the entire field of polymer clay, but to profile Ford and Forlano and raise some questions about their place in the metals community. The use of alternative materials in jewelry is as old as polymer clay but all bottle caps, broken glass and river rocks are not equal either. Ultimately, it's all about design. *Metalsmith*, SNAG, and this writer will continue to search out good design, regardless of material, wherever it appears. I thank Ms. Koop and others for responding in a way that brings the dialogue into the public domain, where, hopefully, more contributions will follow.

Marjorie Simon
Highland Park, NJ

To the Editor:

Congratulations on your recent article on David Ford and Steven Forlano. The production was exquisite, with beautiful photography and an appealing layout. I was sorry that the tone of the writing did not match the quality of the work. While Ford and Forlano are indeed creating some of the most beautiful work that incorporates polymer clay, there are many others who are also creating works at such a high level. The author's ignorance of this was a great disappointment. The fact that that ignorance only served as a basis for making insulting comments about "hobbyists" did a great disservice to the professionalism of your magazine.

The polymer clay community, like any other art or craft, has practitioners in a wide spectrum from those who are just entering the craft to those who are long-time creators with polished professional styles. In these times, I feel it is of paramount importance that we celebrate creative community, and support one another. Celebration of quality can still be achieved in your publication without denigrating others who seek to achieve it.

Elizabeth King
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Editor's Note:

The editor would like to acknowledge the numerous messages received from members of the polymer clay community in response to Marjorie Simon's article on Ford and Forlano. We are very sorry if Ms. Simon's comments seemed to disparage the seriousness of polymer clay and its users. Her assessment of Ford and Forlano's work was actually intended as a celebration of the material and its great creative potential.

A Tribute to Enid Kaplan

by Barbara Stutman

Enid Kaplan died of acute myeloid leukemia in Israel on October 20, 2002, at the age of 48. She leaves behind her husband, Jordan Deitcher, and their 8-year-old son, Aden.

Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital offered Enid a last hope in her valiant struggle to remain alive; before that she had spent many months in a Montreal hospital. She made her rooms there a home away from home—walls were papered floor to ceiling with her recent art, surfaces were laden with all sorts of materials, objects, and implements, and wonderful music was always playing in the background.

Amidst all the vibrant color and chaos Enid would be ensconced cross-legged on her bed, resplendent in a brightly-colored turban, on good days still bursting with energy and enthusiasm, convinced that she would overcome. As generous as ever, she shared her skills as well as her passion for life with fellow patients, either by lending them paintings for their rooms or by helping them create healing works of their own. Nurses, too, were inspired by her openhearted way of coping with her plight.

For Enid, creating was like breathing; she could never stop. In the hospital, as well as working on her mixed-media assemblages and her journal, she actively searched for new ways to make jewelry without using metals, as she was convinced that toxins related to her years of working with metals under less than optimal conditions had contributed considerably to her illness. Health in the workplace was to be a major cause of hers when she recovered.

Enid and I met sometime in the 1980s, when I signed up for a workshop with this accomplished New York jeweler. Her connection to my city, Montreal, had begun with her relationship with Jordan; they wed and eventually moved here. She immediately immersed herself in Quebec culture, becoming bilingual and lending her dynamic energy to the local jewelry community. She taught at Concordia University and became head of the junior-college jewelry program at the Saidye Bronfman Center of the Y.M.-Y.W.H.A., bringing in respected American colleagues to give workshops there, and to lecture on their work at the newly opened Gallery Noel Guyomarc'h.

We quickly became friends, and I was fortunate to have attended my first SNAG conference with Enid. I knew she was gregarious, but I was astounded not only at the amount of people she knew but at the number with whom she had established a vital connection. In those days, amongst her colleagues, I saw a person who loved the comfort of catching up with old friends, the pleasure of exchanging ideas, and the challenge of engaging in debate. I saw a woman who was extremely ambitious yet eminently approachable, one with an instinctively generous soul who was always more than pleased to put people in touch with one another to further their careers as well as the field of metals.

As a teacher, Enid was nothing less than inspirational. Over the years a never-ending parade of students, young and old alike, studied in her out-of-town workshops or passed through her studio doors, attracted by her warmth and spirit and her ability to help them find a beauty they never knew existed. She shared herself with her students, putting them in touch with what they could accomplish and, as I witnessed time and time again, they left exhilarated and highly motivated.

Travel played a vital part in Enid's existence. She was a vibrant, articulate speaker and storyteller, who captivated her audiences with accounts of her journeys hiking with Jordan through remote regions of the world. Her travels, especially months-long trips through the Americas, Africa, and Southeast Asia, were pivotal in making her conscious of her need to be not simply an artist but also a spiritual guide—much like the tribal shamans she observed—motivating her to create amulets and tools for "making the invisible world visible."

Enid adored color; she loved texture. Not satisfied with the muted tones available by simply mixing metals or applying patinas, Enid learned how to pigment her work vividly and permanently by using reactive metals. Eventually she developed a method of combining richly textured surface treatments with anodizing that was so painterly it appeared as though she had sketched and painted directly on the metal. With time she became able to suffuse her surfaces with life, somehow coaxing her jewelry into sparkling with a remarkable iridescence.

Relishing the challenge of working in different scales, Enid created wall sculptures, installations for the theater, sculptures for the out-of-doors, as well as jewels that were often removable components of larger sculptural pieces. Lately she had been working on various types of Judaica and was in the process of fabricating a Torah crown for her synagogue when she fell ill.

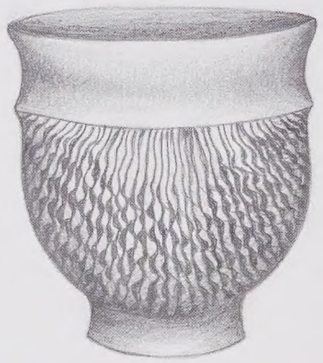
Enid contributed articles, interviews, and commentaries to publications such as *Metalsmith*, and pieces on her work and travels, written by others, were published there and in *American Craft*, *Ornament*, and numerous other magazines and books. She taught, lectured, and exhibited in galleries and museums throughout the world and her work can be found in many public collections.

Barbara Stutman is a studio jeweler and teacher living in Montreal.

SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICAN GOLDSMITHS

The Organization for Jewelers, Designers and Metalsmiths

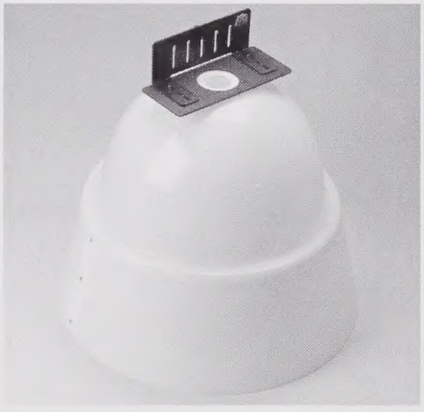
www.snagmetalsmith.org



Cynthia Eid Creates Winning Design

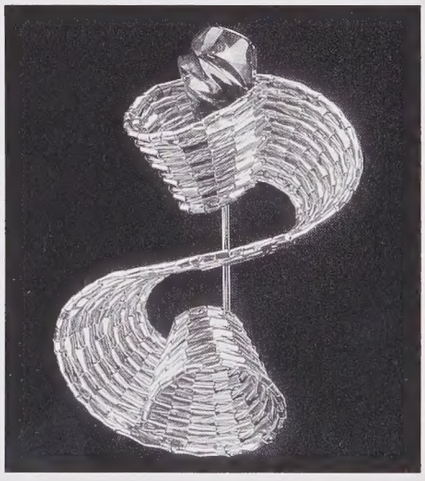
Jurors Bernard Bernstein, Lane Coulter, and Mary Ann Scherr unanimously chose Cynthia Eid's sterling silver vessel as the winning design in SNAG's Honorary Member Award design competition. The bowl is microfolded, formed with a Bonny Doon hydraulic press, and refined through traditional hollowware techniques. An added anticlastic rim will be engraved with the honoree's name. Eid's bowls will be presented to future recipients of the SNAG Honorary Member Award, which recognizes people who have made important contributions to the fields of jewelry and metalsmithing. Past honorees have include Oppi Untracht, Arline Fisch, and Helen Drutt English.

In a career spanning three decades, Cynthia Eid has amassed a significant body of awards and honors, publications, and exhibitions. She makes one-of-a-kind and custom hollowware, jewelry, and Judaica and has taught metalsmithing for many years. For winning the design competition, Eid received a $500 credit for Allcraft tools, provided courtesy of Tevel Herbstmann.



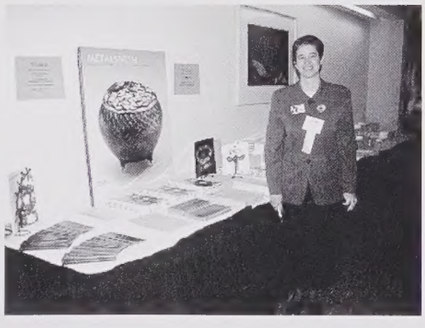
SNAG'S Marketplace Breakfast at ACC

Cindy Lichfield, inventor of the Cloud Dome photography systems, was the featured speaker at the third annual SNAG breakfast, held at the 2003 American Craft Council show in Baltimore. Lichfield presented "The Cloud Dome System: Images in the Digital Age" to an enthusiastic audience. Using a computer, digital camera, and the Cloud Dome, she addressed ways to photograph work with a digital camera and send pictures electronically. Topics included high-quality image compression, suitable drop shadow effects manipulated in Photoshop and other photography software, and tips for documenting small-scale jewelry and hollowware, including avoiding such common photography problems as hot spots, reflections, low light, and unwanted shadows. Additional sponsors of the breakfast were Metalwerx, Northeast Refractory, and Prestige Casters.



SNAG and *Metalsmith* sponsor MJSA seminars

SNAG and *Metalsmith* co-sponsored educational seminars by Barbara Berk and David Feldman at the Manufacturing Jewelers and Suppliers of America Expo-NY at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in March. Designer Barbara Berk presented "At the Bench Live: Weaving Gold," a step-by-step demonstration of how high-karat gold sheet and wire can be hand woven to create one-of-a-kind jewelry with the texture of fabric. David Feldman, small business consultant and partner at Metalliferous, addressed "Pricing for Maximum Sales and Profitability." Feldman has two MBA degrees from New York University, in new venture management and finance, and he has created his own inventory and pricing software specifically oriented to jewelers and designers.



SNAG and *Metalsmith* at Catalog in Motion

Executive Director Dana Singer greeted thousands of metalsmiths at the SNAG booth at Rio Grande's Catalog in Motion, distributing complimentary magazines, newsletters, brochures, and other materials. This event was held in conjunction with the American Gem Trade Association's annual February gem show in Tucson.

top to bottom

Cynthia Eid
Drawing for SNAG's Honorary Member Award, 2002
finished vessel: 3 x 3 x 3"

The Cloud Dome, a device that allows for professional-quality photographs by stabilizing the camera and evenly diffusing light.

Barbara Berk
Double Spiral Brooch, 1998
18k gold, Zambian Amethyst
2 1/8 x 1 3/8 x 1 1/8"

SNAG executive director, Dana Singer, at Rio Grande's Catalog in Motion, Tucson.

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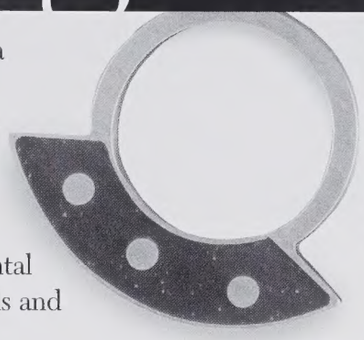

Joanna Gollberg

No entry fee.

Deadline:
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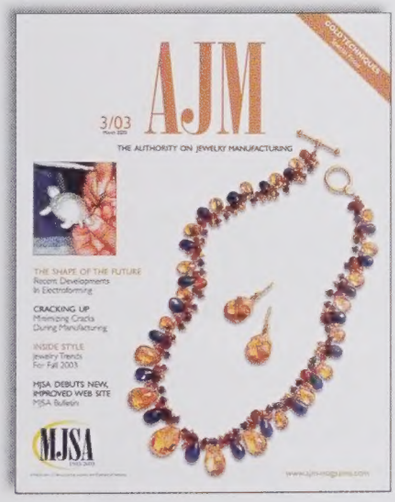

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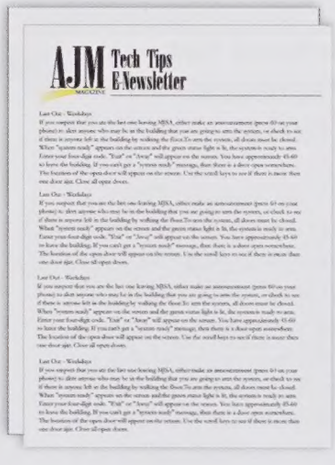

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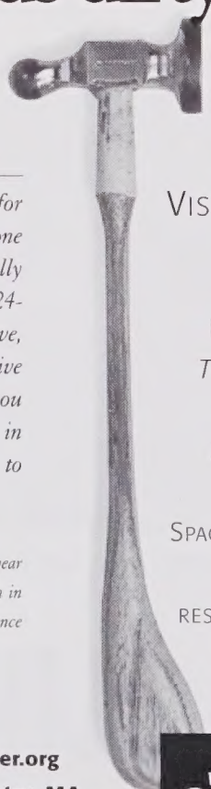

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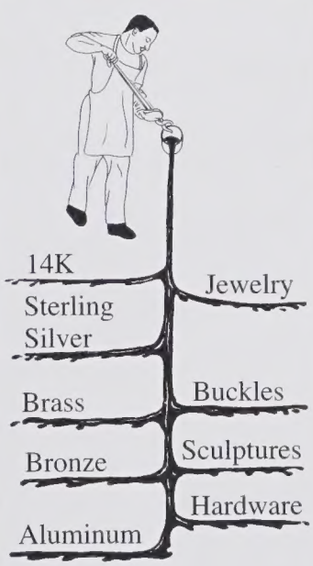

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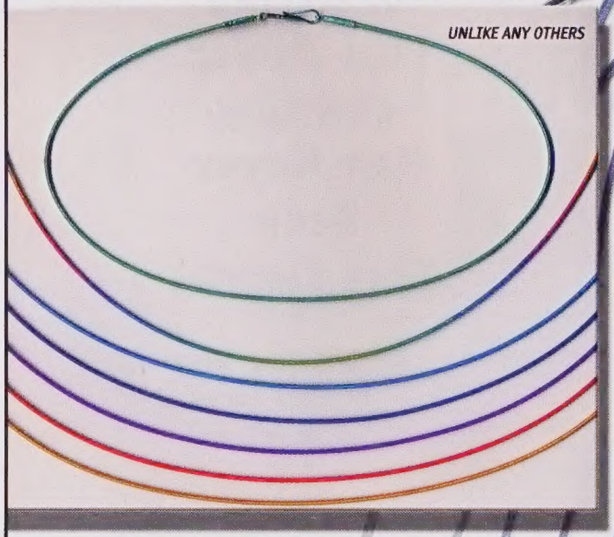

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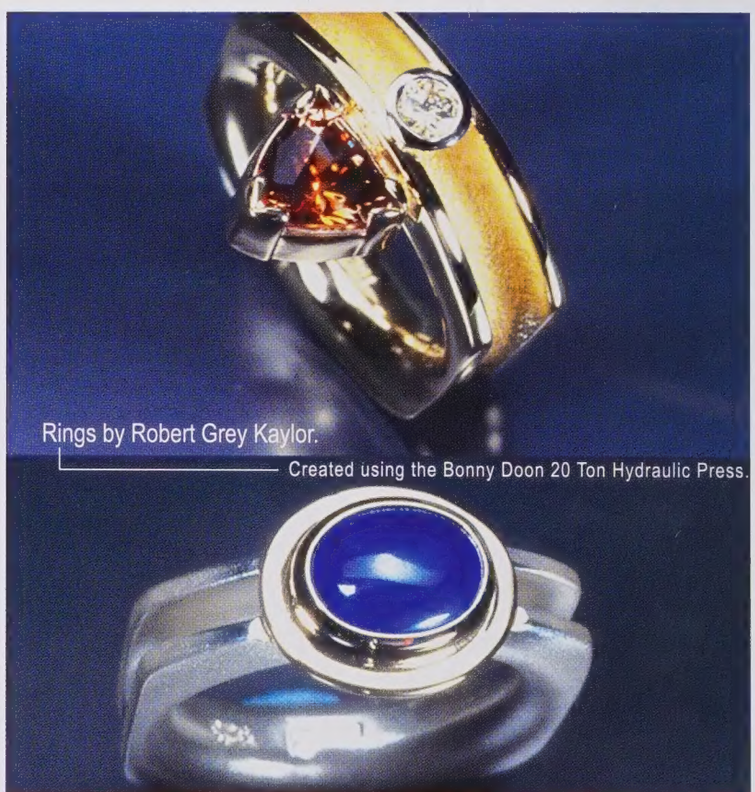

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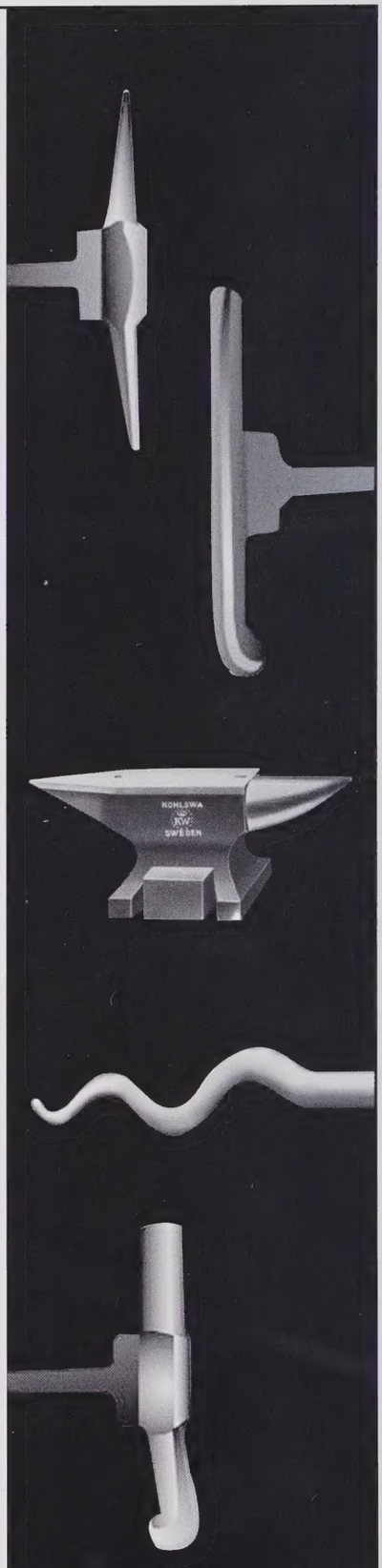

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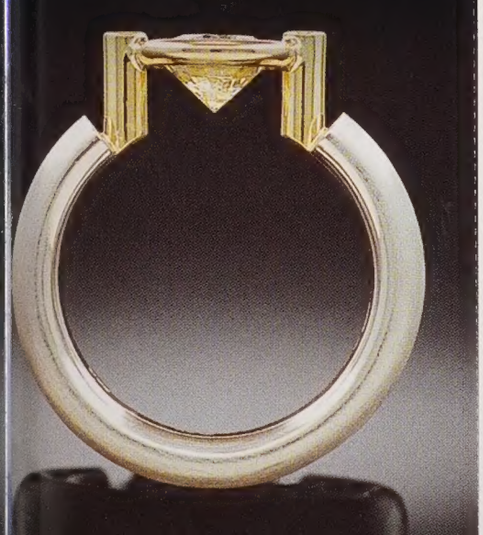

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Myra Mimlitsch-Gray
Cup with Oval, 1998
sterling silver
5 x 4 x 3"
Photo: Robert Storm

Biba Schutz
Ceremonial Pendant, 1998
copper, sterling, fine silver
4 3/4 x 1 1/4 x 1 1/2"
Photo: Ron Boszko

(EIP 2002 *Metalsmith*)
cover: Lindsay K. Rais
Stacked Basket, 2001
Photo: D. James Dee

Helen Shirk
Sustaining Sprit XXVII, 2000
copper, patina, colored pencils
6 x 23 x 23"

Whitney Boin
Post Engagement Ring, 1996
produced since 1988
platinum, 18k
Photo: Todd Flashner

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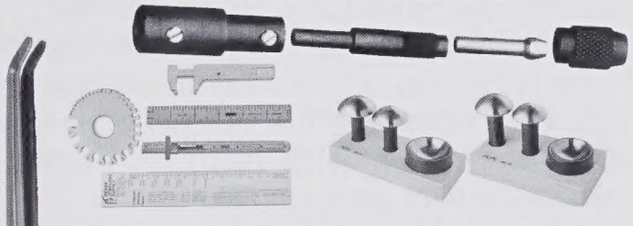

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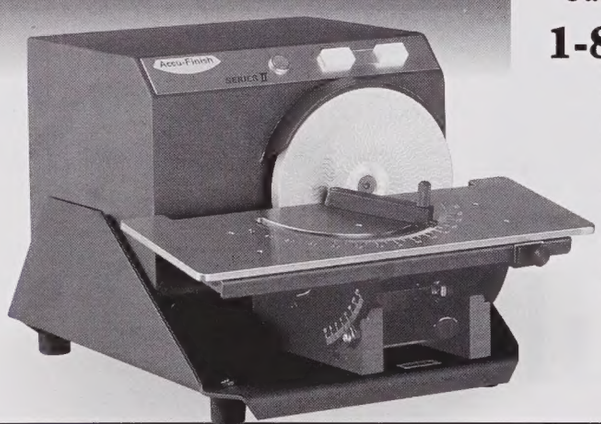

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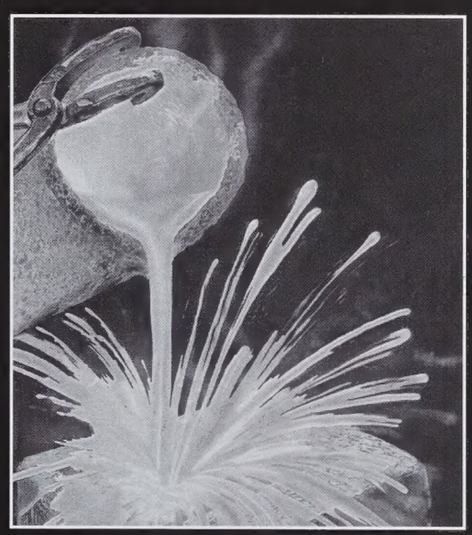

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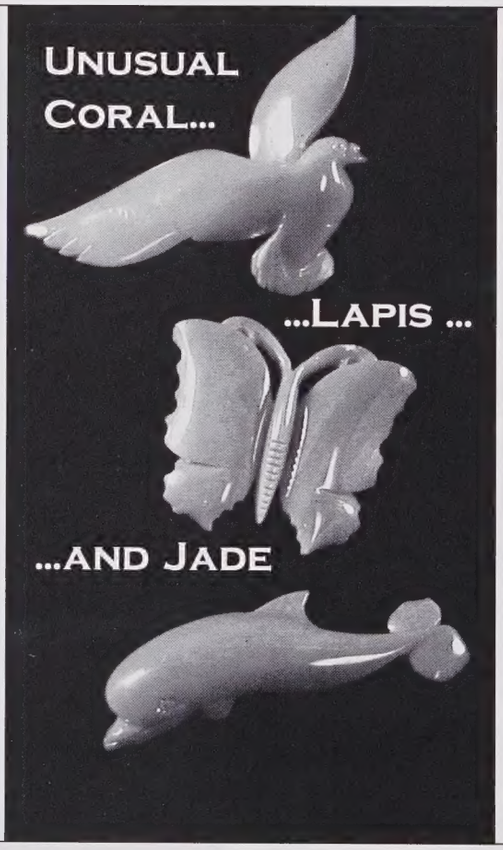

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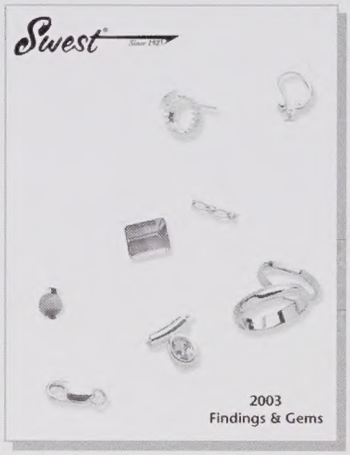

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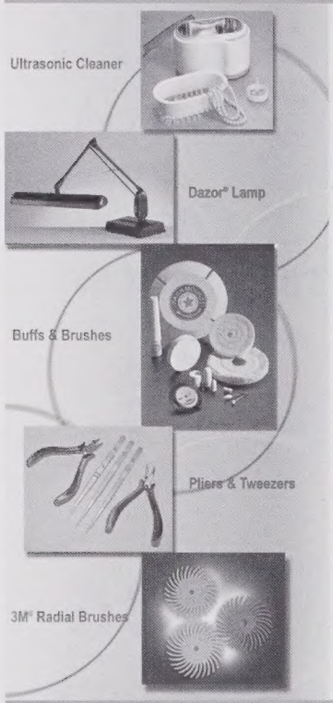

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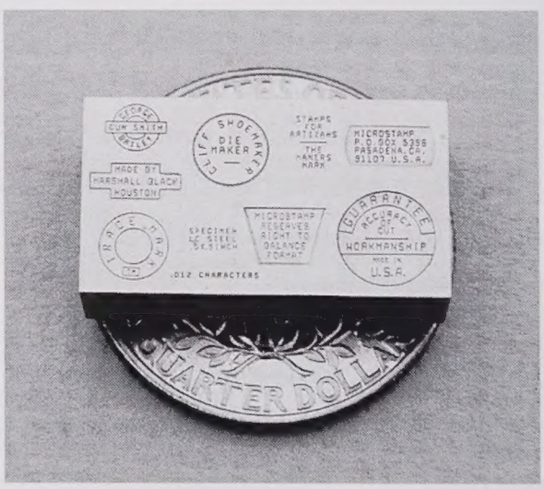

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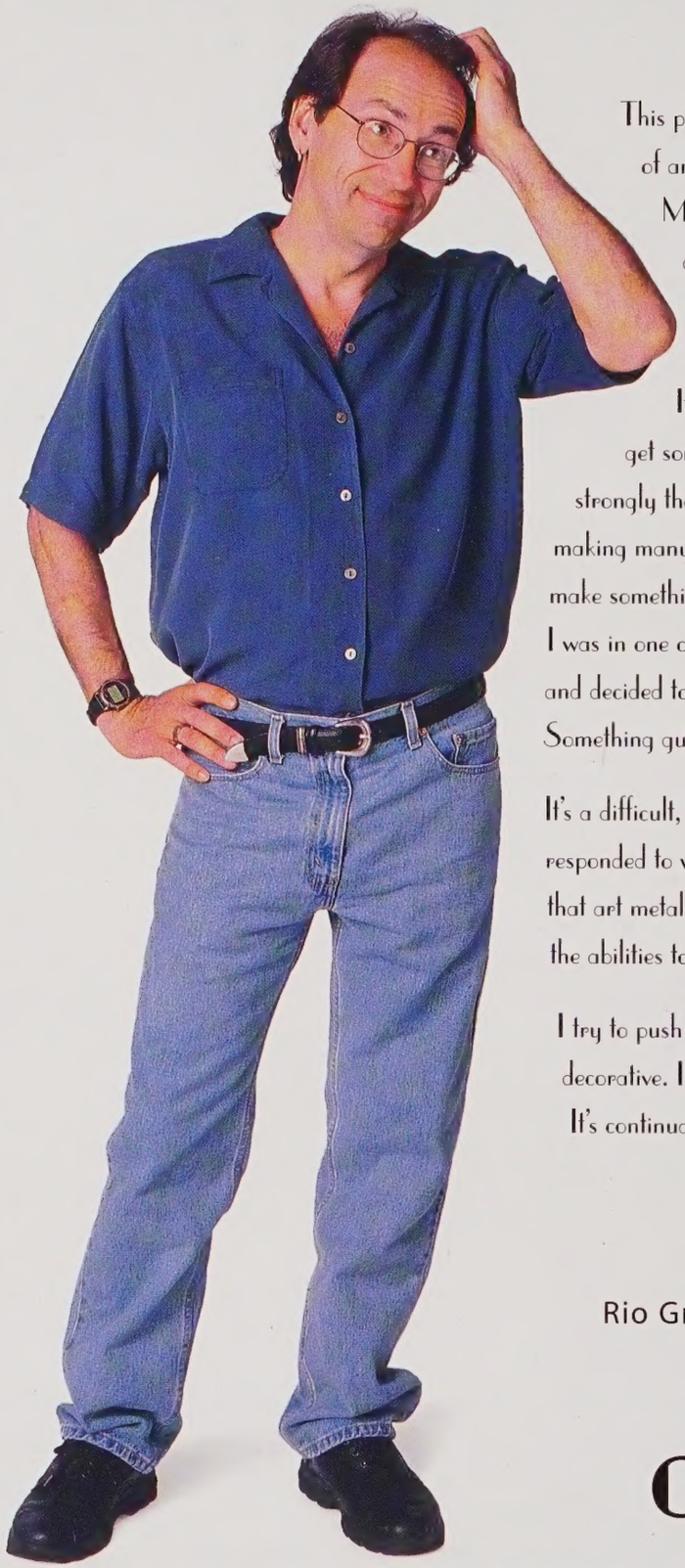

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